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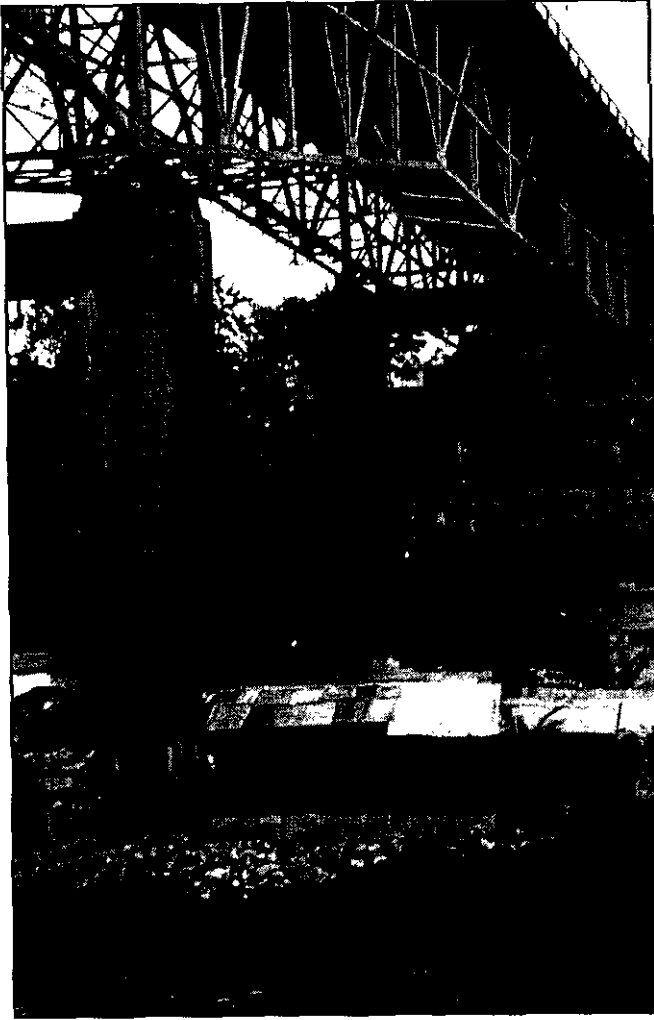
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ZOZOBRA

the tensions of urban space

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ABSTRACT

My enquiry starts from a practical perspective: that of the intractable problems of our inner cities; inadequate service delivery, absent infrastructure, poverty, unemployment. Themes unquiet and persistent. I offer a critique of approaches to policy and argue that post-structural theoretical shifts offer new practical perspectives and the potential for imaginative understandings, which remain largely unexplored. I focus on the built space and the emotions in an attempt to alter the perspective from which questions are asked, and to problematise the questioning process itself. Questions of method are integral to this thesis.

The story told is that of the barrio of La Ciénaga. It is at once a particular story; that of one of the oldest barrios of Santo Domingo, the capital city of the Dominican Republic, and of the individuals who live there. It is also a typical story of a deprived inner city area that can be found the world over. Residents of La Ciénaga discuss the public spaces of the barrio, the private spaces of their homes and their links and visions of the wider city which surrounds them. Stories tell of what it feels like to live in such a place, how the built environment affects social relations, the possibility of community, aspirations and a sense of self. In the second half of the thesis I look at the story telling process: the purpose of stories: their ability to reveal and heal. I return to my practical concerns and examine the implications of both my method and the findings uncovered in the first half of the thesis, for the concrete recurring problem of the barrio: waste and absent infrastructure. The result is a solution that neither I, nor the barrio residents, could have imagined at the outset.

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GLOSSARY

<i>basura</i>	rubbish, waste
<i>cañada</i>	open drain, gully or sewer
<i>callejón</i>	narrow lanes, passages and alleyways
<i>chisme</i>	malevolent gossip
<i>cimarrón</i>	freed slave
<i>decreto</i>	decree
<i>desalojo</i>	eviction
<i>luá</i>	spirit or being (associated with voodoo)
<i>merengue</i>	Dominican musical rhythm
<i>palos</i>	indigenous drums
<i>play</i>	baseball pitch
<i>relleno</i>	filling, stuffing
<i>tiguere</i>	streetwise, also sometimes a criminal or member of street gang
<i>zozobra</i>	anxiety or tension, to over-turn
<i>Ayuntamiento</i>	City Council
<i>Ciudad Alternativa</i>	Dominican NGO working in the barrios citywide
<i>COPADEBA</i>	barrio level organisation
<i>NGO</i>	non governmental organisation

INTRODUCTION

‘Only with the heart can one see rightly, what is essential is invisible to the eye.’ Saint Exupéry

LA CIÉNAGA: A CORROSIVE CITY HEART

If you cross the suspension bridges which span the eastern and western halves of the Dominican capital, the barrio is clearly visible below. Forty thousand people live within a dense patchwork of rusting tin which stretches as far as the eye can see. A jumbled sprawl of crowded tin roofs, the barrio of La Ciénaga seems to sink heavily into the polluted river: the corrosive heart of the city.

La Ciénaga is a place constructed from the detritus of the city above, built between the network of drainage canals and open sewers which run with the city’s waste into the River Ozama. It is a place which exerts a curious fascination on those who gaze from the bridge above: at once a site of fear, of one’s own worst imaginings and thoughts best discarded. Images of the reputed violence, the squalor and chaos run through the mind, evoking feelings of fear, and also those of relief: a sense of security, of being apart, of having a home above the bridge.

On the 17th September 1991 President Balaguer announced his intention to erase the barrio. '*Un peligro público*', 'A public danger', 'A place not fit for human habitation' shouted the newspaper headlines. Carefully deploying news of the cholera and typhoid epidemics of the previous months and the mounting numbers of child deaths, the president at once manipulated a fear of disease and made a promise of new homes. The apartment blocks built along geometrical grids would offer a new way of life; an ordered existence. It was as if presidential decree number 358-91 announced not only a 'massive eviction', but a vision of the modern, clean city where there could be no room for this haphazard development at its heart. Above the bridge the fate of the barrio took centre stage in national urban debates.

For those who live below, the announcement strikes terror. This is a process which has been lived before. With screeching megaphones the presidential agents announce the planned eviction within the barrio. Twenty four hours notice is given but the looters come first tearing up the iron roof sheets. Then the bulldozers: the chaos, the screams as walls are ripped apart. Pandemonium. It is impossible to carry away your few but precious possessions in time. Then rubble; silence, such a small heap of dust.

And a sense of injustice. Violent protests, uneasy truces. Those who live in La Ciénaga want to stay or, at the very least, they want their barrio to be 'cleaned' in a different way. As the residents attempted to defend their homes, the president sent in the marines. The

ostensible aim was to ensure a 'pacified' continuation of the eviction; however, after the initial destruction of fifty homes, the announced *desalojo* [eviction] could be forced no further. The marines remained, restricting the movements of the residents; registering who comes and goes, controlling what can be brought into the barrio and taken out. The battle lines had been drawn over place, the right to remain in the barrio and, ultimately, within the city. What seemed to be at stake however were much more complex negotiations over the meaning of the city, the methods by which it might grow and develop. In 1993 I went below to stay.

THE INNER CITY: THE INTRACTABLE PROBLEM

By the turn of the century it is estimated that in excess of one and a half billion people will live in cities, of whom a quarter will be living in poverty, in areas not dissimilar to La Ciénaga.¹ These are places where few would choose to live yet, like the seemingly intractable problems they contain, the world's barrios persist and grow in number. Their difficulties are sometimes 'solved' only to re-emerge, take new form or lurk in unexpected guise. The proposed *desalojo* of La Ciénaga is symbolic of a deeper conundrum. In the same way that the bulldozing of the barrio would only swell the numbers who live in equal misery on the city's edges, urban problems seem to move from

one place to another both within the consciousness of city dwellers and planners and physically within the city.

Urban debates flourish: a range of organisations, initiatives and projects attempt to regenerate our inner cities and solve their problems. Yet, despite these efforts and the considerable sums invested, the barrios expand, their problems intensify. During ten years of development work, across cities in three continents, I have been consistently struck by the small but significant ways in which the life of a low income neighbourhood is so different in practice from the official story told. I have become convinced that there are deep rooted problems (shared by a range of apparently different organisations) with the way we look at, understand and address such places and their issues. Something is missing.

As academics and urban policy makers try to describe and then address the barrio (a place largely outside our own lived experience) we include that which is intelligible to our own logic, our 'common' sense. It is a process that continually demands that the detail which doesn't quite 'fit' is silently passed over and excluded. The result, while it builds on elements of reality, is a constructed fiction which seems to better represent the poverty of our own imaginations than the places we purport to describe. The concrete result is the repeated failure to address the issues and problems which face those who live in the inner city.

¹ World Bank 1991: 4, 45

Living and working below the bridge,² I am attempting to literally get underneath these dominant representations of the barrio, to look in a different way. A recourse to theory has provided the material to further challenge my own imagination and an altered perspective from which to ask different questions: questions designed to elicit the stories of barrio residents. What does it feel like to live in such a place and what are the dominant issues from the perspective of these residents?

These are the stories of my two self appointed *comadres* (the ‘godmothers’ who watch out for me) Margot and Margarita, of the witch and the priest, of Javier, plantain seller and dreamer, Amparo whose house I live in, Freddy who tries to organise. These are their experiences as they construct and live their own world, hanging on to a tenuous path of survival as if by their finger tips. There are those who escape, those who drown and those who somehow robustly hold on, with small but obstinate hope. There are moments of real terror as the drug squads sweep through the barrio, automatic weapons in each hand, leaving a wake of mayhem and, too often, death. There are also gentle rocking chair hours; the co-existence of the ordinary and the extraordinary. Moments of pleasure, of laughter and raucous wild talking. And there have been days when I too have wondered if the best thing would not be that the entire barrio is bulldozed.

² The terms ‘above’ and ‘below’ the bridge are common parlance in Santo Domingo: they denote a location within the city and also a socio-economic status. Borrowing from those who live below the bridge in particular, I have at once used the terms as a shorthand throughout this thesis to denote a spatial and social location in the city, and tried to problematise a vision which separates the city into ‘problem areas’ and ‘desirable areas’. Metaphorically I suggest the ‘above’ and ‘below’ exist in every city.

I do not mean to imply that the story of this thesis (constructed from these stories told by the residents) represents an alternative ‘truth’. This local story, with its different perspective and elements of surprise does however provide the means to explore the broader question as to how we might re-imagine our inner cities, make them cherished places in which to live.

THE BARRIO

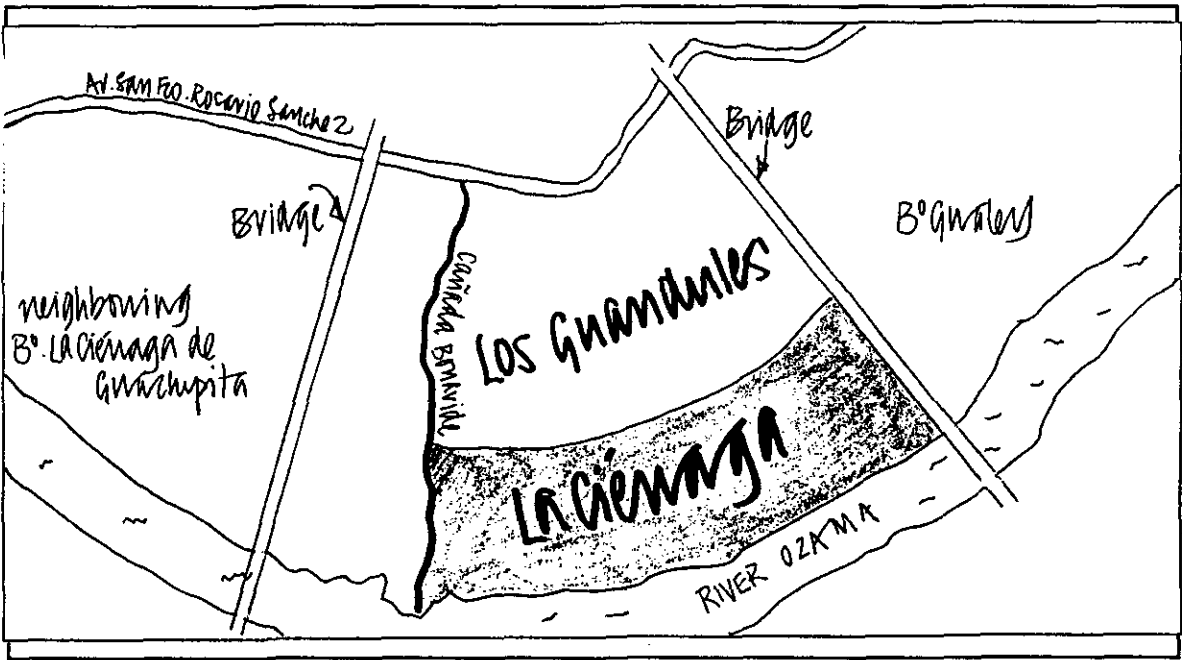
La Ciénaga is not the place it first seems: the slippery statistics and elusive measurements provide an uncertain profile of the barrio and illustrate the difficulties, setting the ground for the theoretical section which follows.

Introducing La Ciénaga

La Ciénaga, meaning marsh, is built on and largely from the rubbish and silt that has accreted at the banks of the River Ozama. It is uncertain ground and I slip as I walk along the barrio’s most extreme and precarious edge. ‘*Aparente tierra*’, ‘It appears to be earth’, Freddy, one of the barrio’s organisers and residents, says to me with a rueful smile as he watches. The barrio only ‘appears’ to be solid ground, a place.

The confusion of names by which the barrio is known exacerbates a sense of La Ciénaga’s instability. Residents call the place where I stay La Ciénaga, a name, (confusingly similar to that of the neighbouring barrio, La Ciénaga de Guachupita), which differentiates the lower ground from the rest of the barrio known officially as Los Guandules. At the city level both church and state use yet another name, Domingo Savio, to denote respectively the parish and the municipal district. In this thesis La Ciénaga refers to that part of the barrio of Los Guandules where most of those whose stories are told live. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: A Map of the Barrio of La Ciénaga/Los Guandules



La Ciénaga/Los Guandules is a place whose borders and location are disputed. It appears and disappears off city maps according to the movements and mutations of state policy

for the city as a whole. The barrio is clearly shown on city maps printed in 1994 but it has been removed from those most recently printed in 1997.³

Within the barrio the meanings attached to places also shift and change. One year the most dangerous place was reputed to be behind Juana's *colmado* [corner shop]. Twelve months later, the area behind the *arrozal* [the swamp] is feared. These places change again as the day progresses. The hour before dusk in La Ciénaga is a gentle one when the barrio is bathed in the glow of a kinder late afternoon sun. Adults bathe and children play; skipping and shrieking in the *callejones* [narrow lanes/passages]. As darkness falls the sense of space closes in; places inhabited earlier can become pockets where no-one dares enter. These are places which often seem unreal not just because their characteristics change and move. They are almost always spoken of in terms of distance. Sites of violence are always reputed to be where the speaker is not: in Gualey (an adjacent barrio), in the dark area immediately below the bridge, or even another callejón. These associations are unseen by those who do not enter the barrio and try to plan its destiny from above the bridge.

The history of the '*play*' [baseball pitch] illustrates the fate of the community project on this uncertain ground. The *play*, a large open space in the middle of the barrio, was never used as such. A swampy, mosquito infested space it lay abandoned despite the

³ See the official city maps published by Mapas GAAR, Santo Domingo. Ostensibly the barrio has been removed to make way for the planned widening of the Avenida San Francisco Rosario Sanchez which forms

prioritised demands of the residents for a space for children to play. In 1994/95 Ciudad Alternativa and COPADEBA (two local, non governmental organisations who work with a number of barrios in Santo Domingo) set about draining and clearing the play for community use. The project was completed with the help of many of the residents. Immediately however the space was invaded by the same residents and many of those who had previously been evicted from other parts of the barrio. When I returned to the barrio in 1996 all evidence of what had been the play had disappeared. How could this have happened, why did those people who so wanted this area to play in not protect the space, I asked Guillermo, one of the parish priests as we chatted one evening. You see, he explained, it was never really a play, it was an imagined place.

In an unfixed place, the 'community' project has a most unexpected outcome. It appears at first perhaps that nothing positive can be done. Yet I suggest this might be only another 'appearance', the result of a mistaken starting point. What is revealed are far more complex, interesting and competing ideas about the way that place is conceived and the social alliances that grow out of and actively influence the continuing shaping of the barrio.

A Short History and Profile of the Barrio

La Ciénaga/Los Guandules is one of the oldest barrios in the city. First inhabited in its current form in the 1950s, there are prior histories (unspoken in the barrio) that tell of earlier visitations and settlements. In the seventeenth century the banks of the river Ozama were settled by the *cimarrones* [free blacks]. Escaping the bonds of slavery and their 'owners', the *cimarrones* built their own communities against the social, legal and spatial current of their times.⁴

Christopher Columbus was an even earlier visitor. Writing a letter beside the river Ozama, 'his body creaks with rheumatism, but his heart jumps for joy'.⁵ Columbus reported to Spain in 1498 that he had found 'Earthly Paradise'. He was to return again to the site of what is now La Ciénaga, where he was imprisoned before his last ignominious voyage to Spain in chains. Collective memory forges few links between these histories and the barrio of today. The Taino Indian markings faintly visible in places on the barrio escarpment are however a reminder (to me at least) of the layers and repetitions in the barrio's history.

4 Mella recounts how the first *cimarrones* under their leader Parejón settled on the east banks of the Ozama. By 1633 the place known as San Lorenzo de Los Negros occupied a significant part of the colonial economy. The *cimarrones* provided services and labour to the formal city in a neat parallel to the economic role of the barrios currently found along the banks of the Ozama. This did little to ease their position in the eyes of the authorities who complained of the threat posed by these people who 'were reproducing like rabbits', constituting 'a focus of insurrection'. The first eviction took place on 25 of September 1714 from lands the Jesuits were claiming as theirs. (A further ironic twist given the important role of the Jesuits in defending barrio residents from the threat of eviction over the last thirty years) (Mella: 1993). See also Deive for a history of the *cimarrones* of San Lorenzo (1997: 91-103).

The history of the current barrio dates from 1957. The dictator Trujillo seized land from the wealthy Vicini family, making it public property and forcibly settling the first residents. Stories collected by some of the barrio's organisers record the original arrival of families evicted from another area of the city known as Faría.⁶ They were taken in a lorry by '*el jefe*' [the chief], as the dictator Trujillo was known, and left with 15 pesos each (approximately one US\$) to build their homes.

During the 1960s the numbers living in the barrio grew: the original residents were joined by others evicted within the city and by migrants from rural areas. In 1965 the bridge above the barrio became the frontline in the U.S. invasion, the April Revolution as it is colloquially known. The role of the residents in the struggles which ensued seemed to many to mark for their barrio a secure place in the city's history. 'Los Guandules was now a sector [of the city] which had written its own name in blood, tears and heroism'.⁷ Yet a decade later, in 1975, President Balaguer already had other ideas for this part of the city. Following Ciclón Eloisa he declared the area a protected green belt and moved three thousand five hundred families to Las Caobas, a place then on the outskirts of the city.

The barrio's history continued to be shaped by the repeated threats (and frequent reality) of the desalojo. An alternate pattern of skirmishes, evictions and 'tolerated illegality' was

⁵ Galeano 1995; 69

⁶ Ciudad Alternativa 1983

⁷ Ciudad Alternativa 1983

established. The state 'silently' provided some services (such as the market and the local primary school, started by the residents in 1962 and completed by President Balaguer) but was still not prepared to recognise the barrio officially.⁸ Despite a tense decade of organised campaigns and protests in the 1970s, the barrio was not provided with infrastructure and its status remained uncertain. At the close of the decade the destruction wrought by hurricane David seemed at once to mark the despondency of the 1970s and to foretell of the hardship and poverty which would characterise the 1980s.

As the Dominican economy reeled during the so called 'decade of crisis' in the 1980s, the barrio's population swelled to its current level of an estimated thirteen thousand families. Between 1950 and 1980 1.3 million Dominicans moved from the countryside to the barrios of Santo Domingo. During the 1980s, as the country's agricultural economy collapsed, the stream became a flood.⁹ Those who could moved to the heart of the city. In a decade punctuated by devaluations, hyper inflation and successive agreements with the IMF (which enforced stringent cuts in the lower echelons of the public sector workforce and the virtual abandonment of public sector spending), the importance of urban location increased.¹⁰ The informal economy offered the only strategy for survival to the Dominican poor who, by the end of the decade, encompassed more than two thirds

⁸ Chantada, 1996

⁹ Foro Urbano 1987: 13

¹⁰ See for example IADB 1992, Lozano 1992: 223, Moya Pons 1994: 209 and MEPES 1993. A more detailed discussion of the Dominican economy and the place of Santo Domingo in the crisis of the 1980s can be found in chapter three. Similar economic policies have been sustained in the 1990s (see World Bank 1995: iii).

of the city's population.¹¹ In a city with limited and expensive transportation, La Ciénaga was seen by many to be an attractive location: close to markets, government offices and the older, wealthier sectors of the city; places where odd jobs could be found.

During the 1990s, the growth of the barrio has abated. The decree of eviction, the constant surveillance of the marines and, to some extent, the barrio's reputation for extreme violence, have limited the numbers who have sought to move there. More than half of the families who currently live in the barrio were born there, one quarter in the homes they still inhabit.¹² Over the period that I have been working in La Ciénaga (1993-1997) it has continued to be a changing place. Many of those I first got to know in 1993 have left. Some return: deported from attempted escapes to Puerto Rico or, like Javier and Margarita, having tried other barrios and found them to be no better. Some such as Arismendy and his 'brothers' rotate between the barrio and the city's prisons. Others appear to hide within themselves, hibernating in a deep inner depression to emerge rested two or three years later.¹³ And newcomers have arrived, constructing somehow in what never seemed to be spaces. 'One goes, three arrive' they always say in La Ciénaga with a shrug.

¹¹ Lozano 1994:9. The World Bank acknowledges that ten percent of the population are living in 'extreme poverty' (1995:23).

¹² Ciudad Alternativa 1998

¹³ I discuss these cases in more detail in chapter four. See Gut's discussion on 'conservation withdrawal' (1989: 14,34).

Population levels and changes are not easily measured by either national data sources or the more localised studies undertaken by organisations such as Ciudad Alternativa. It is not only that people come and go (the majority remain), or the confusing array of names and disputed borders of the barrio. In the Dominican Republic there is a problem with the census which, like the maps, is subject to political whim and infighting. For twenty years, between 1970 and 1990 no census data was available.¹⁴ The census that was eventually organised in 1993 took nearly five years to be analysed and published. Its results were widely distrusted for urban areas in particular since some of the largest barrios in the city such as Los Alcarrizos were classified as rural. Resulting estimates of such basic figures as Santo Domingo's population varied from 1.6 million to 2.4 million.¹⁵

This national data can be supplemented by a local census carried out by Ciudad Alternativa.¹⁶ The current population of La Ciénaga/Los Guandules is recorded by Ciudad Alternativa to be 44,584 of whom 18,000 are resident in the area known as La Ciénaga.¹⁷ A member of the organisation boasted to me at one point that they could 'see' into the homes of every resident, such was the level of detail in the data they held.

¹⁴ A census was taken in 1981 but the data was never fully processed or officially published causing a feud between the government and the census' United Nations sponsors.

¹⁵ ONE 1997. MEPES 1993: 72. An estimated 15 percent of urban areas were classified as rural areas in the original census (Ramirez 1997: 38). The urban data sets have since been re worked by CESDEM a private sector research institute and the city's population is estimated to be approximately 2 million. (Ramirez 1997: 38). La Ciénaga appears within these tabulations as part of the larger aggregate area of Domingo Savio.

¹⁶ Ciudad Alternativa 1998

¹⁷ Figures taken from a census conducted by Ciudad Alternativa in March 1997 (Ciudad Alternativa 1998). These figures can be compared with a population of circa 52,000 recorded in the national census in 1993 and 34,555 recorded in the national census of 1981. Confusingly, the national census figures refer to La

Leaving aside the Benthamite overtones of such a claim, with the exception of population figures their data cannot be disaggregated between the area of the barrio known as Los Guandules and that of La Ciénaga. The result is a composite picture that I do not recognise. For example, average figures which portray almost half of the barrio's men to be in salaried work and only one in ten to be illiterate construct another fiction.¹⁸

It is poverty which brings you to live in the barrio. La Ciénaga and Los Guandules are places where income levels are amongst the lowest in the city. The vast majority earn less than a minimum wage and a quarter of the population earn less than RD\$1,000 per month (less than US\$10).¹⁹ Yet the barrio which stretches in a seamless horizon of rusting roofs contains a myriad of worlds. The parts of the barrio distinguished internally as Los Guandules and La Ciénaga are characterised not only by topographical differences (Los Guandules being on the higher ground of the steep escarpment), but by socio-economic differences. Most of those I talk to who live on the higher ground have never walked in La Ciénaga. Their ties are outwards to the wider city; the place where they work, usually have other family and, most importantly, the place they would like to be associated with. *'No es por ahí que yo vivo !'*, 'That's not where I live!' the groups I work with respond rather indignantly when I show them slides which mix up pictures taken of La Ciénaga with those of nearer where they live.

Ciénaga/Los Guandules and a small area of the adjoining barrio known as La Ciénaga de Guachupita (Ciudad Alternativa 1998:1).

¹⁸ Ciudad Alternativa 1998: 29, 22

Curiously, the limited walking done by many within the barrio results in perceptions of their own barrio which are often misguided or wrong. One example is the conviction of many who live on the higher ground of Los Guandules, that everyone in the barrio has water, a conviction that is far from true.²⁰ Indeed, the difference between barrio lives sometimes seems extreme. On many nights in Amparo's home in La Ciénaga there is nothing to eat. By contrast, Jocasta who lives in Los Guandules complains about the unsightly nature of the barrio market which borders the Avenida. She remonstrates that everyone should use their fridges and shop less frequently. The market and all its surrounding litter would then no longer be necessary. For most of those in La Ciénaga purchasing and cooking has to be a daily activity. It often isn't clear until half way through the morning what if anything can be afforded for that day. The idea of having enough money to buy and store food, even if a shortage of pots and pans were not the issue, is simply beyond the imagination.

I do not mean to imply by these descriptions that the divisions are tightly and distinctly drawn between the two places. There is marked heterogeneity within Los Guandules and La Ciénaga. The more immediate inequalities between those who often live in the same callejón, are the differences that give rise to feelings of discomfort and jealousy that I will

¹⁹ Ciudad Alternativa 1998: 31. A consumer price index for the same period shows a monthly basket of basic food goods to cost RD\$1,307.00 (calculated from data supplied by the DTI).

²⁰ One discussion about water supply took place in Magaly's house in Los Guandules. One woman present, Natty, who lived only a few doors down has no water supply. Shame prevented her from speaking up

discuss in later chapters. I use the differences between Los Guandules and La Ciénaga here to accentuate the difficulty of using statistical sources that refer to the area as a whole.

La Ciénaga which forms the lower part of the barrio, the area most recently inhabited, is the place I have made my home for three extended periods between 1993 and 1997. At the time of hurricane David (1979), only three or four houses had been built near the river. It was this part of the barrio which expanded most rapidly during the 1980s. Many families moved from the higher ground of Los Guandules seeing the opportunity for more space. My comadre Margot was one of the first. She tells stories of the terror of the first nights in a dark, still wooded area. Twice her house has collapsed in landslides (the *derrumbes* which still threaten the precariously built homes). She lost most of her possessions, but she was glad to escape her violent partner and find a place to erect the roof under which she could bring up her daughters. Similar motives and the advantages of living in the heart of the city encouraged others who settled near already established urban relatives.

Bordering the cañada Bonavide (the open drain of seven of the city's largest barrios), La Ciénaga is more sink than marsh. Running from the cañada Bonavide are a myriad of anonymous tributaries and named wider channels. They give rise to a very particular way

during the discussion. All the women present were unaware that, until 1995, no home in La Ciénaga had an internal tap.

of living. Rubbish, much of it thrown in by those who live in the other barrios above, accumulates in the gullies and channels. Water seeps from the blocked cañadas into puddles that turn peculiar foetid colours. The barrio is flat, low lying and lacks either drainage facilities or waste collection. Moving around thus involves a skilled technique of hopping from stone to stone in the mud infested pathways (the callejones), clambering up steep banks of accumulated filth and crossing the many improvised bridges. The cañadas are a site of fear; there is always the possibility of falling in and the horror of what might be and often is washed up.

The house where I stay with Amparo is low down near the river, pressing up on one side against the cañada Juan Bosco. On the other side our neighbours are less than an arm's width away. It is a home of patchwork pink zinc with a lumpy earth floor. A door opens onto a latrine and a tap. Inside cardboard partitions separate off 'rooms' for Amparo and her husband, María Elena their nineteen year old daughter and her younger twin brothers.

María Elena cleared off one of her hooks and a section of the clothes line that runs across her bed, a barrio wardrobe, for my things. I share her bed and her tiny space. Her exhausting day starts at 5.00am: she is collected in a mini bus from the road at the top of the barrio to do a shift at the Hush Puppy factory in the north of the city. At midday she returns to the east of the city to go to school. Her school shift lasts until 8.00pm when her homework starts. She is determined to go to university. It is usually about 1.00am by the time we crawl under the mosquito net, top and tail in her narrow bed.

There are holes in the roof through which I can see the stars. More often it is the rain, which drumming down on the zinc roofs, drips in through the holes; cold drops around your neck. It is at night that I feel the weight of this place. The barrio eventually falls still and in the silence I am more conscious than ever of the dense humanity that surrounds me; the rhythms of many breathings, babies who cry. There is the noise of the odd gun shot. Our house is wired with a crude alarm system meant to warn of any intruders. At last I sleep. And then with the dawn, the barrio wakes at once; a cacophony of conversation, merengue, shouts, arguments, laughter. It seems an ancient process, an interminable round.

In 1993 I first stayed in the barrio to conduct research on women's health and employment (Cottam 1993). In 1996 and 1997 I returned to La Ciénaga staying in the barrio for three to four month periods in order to carry out the research for this thesis. For the purposes of this current research I have interviewed over seventy-five individuals and worked intensively with five groups, in different spatial pockets of the barrio: four groups live in La Ciénaga, one in Los Guandules (for the purposes of comparison). Each group is composed of about twelve individuals (most of whom did not know each other well at the start of my work even though they may have been neighbours). Over the period, the core groups have remained the same, although other individuals have attached themselves, joined and left. This has, to some extent, been a fluid process, not directed by me. There has been an emphasis on women, in part a result of my original research

interests when I first stayed in the barrio in 1993,²¹ and in part a result of the greater ease with which I have been able to mix with the women.

Each year I have designed a series of simple modelling and mapping exercises designed to promote discussion broadly around what it means to live in the barrio. These structured exercises, repeated with each group, have been supplemented by my own observations and recorded conversations throughout the days and over the years. A more detailed discussion of the research process can be found in Annexe A: On Methodology.

The stories gathered in this process form the core of the text in the chapters which follow.

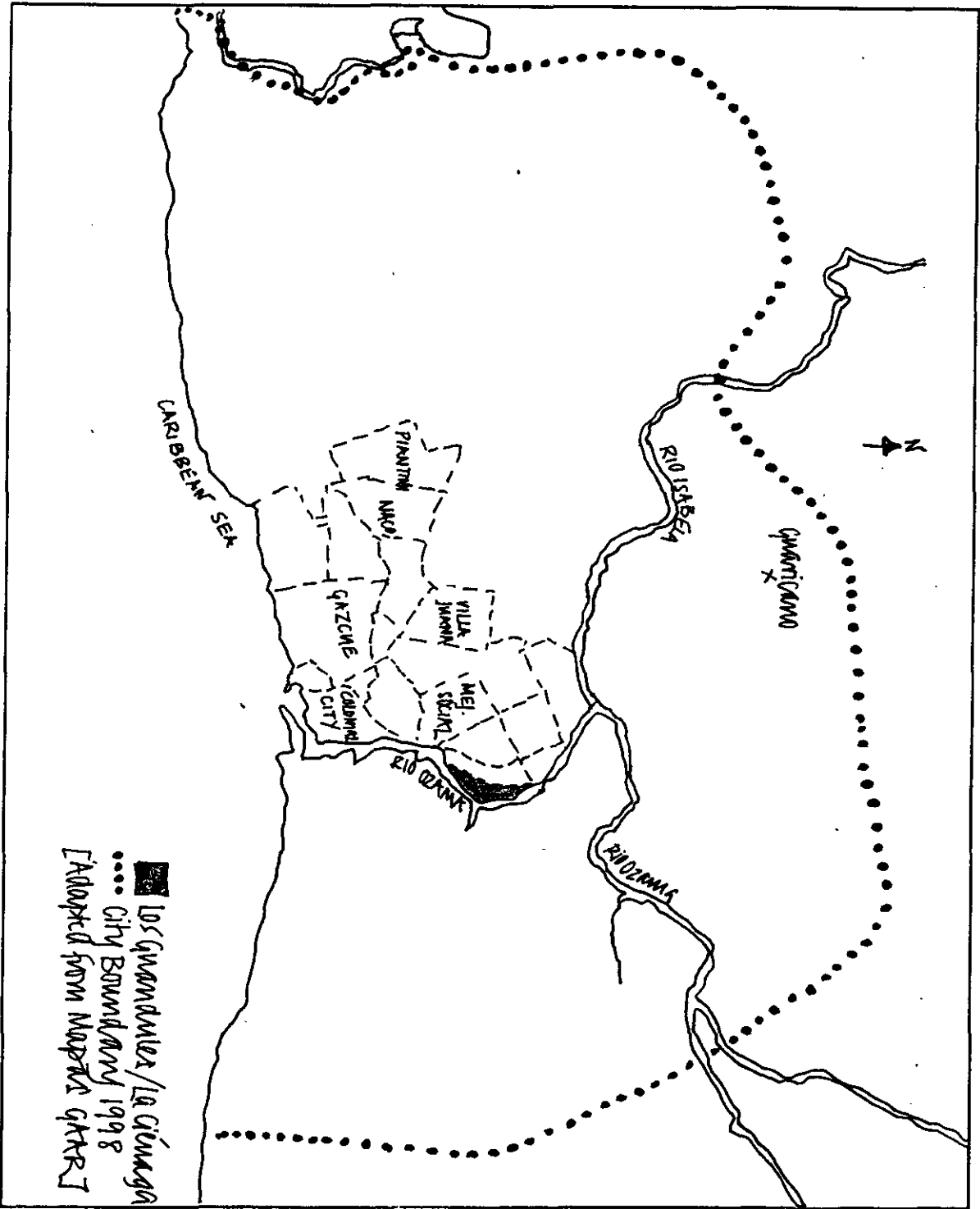
Locating the Barrio within the City

Santo Domingo is the city to which the residents of La Ciénaga belong. They live at its heart on the banks of the river (see Figure 2); they are linked however tenuously to its economy and politics. The varied world of the barrio and the lives of those who live there cannot be understood outside the context of this capital city. Santo Domingo, passing over the resident's heads, is at once unreachable and the dreamt of bridge to another place, a different way of life.

²¹ Early research focused on the health and employment status of women (Cottam 1993). In subsequent visits to the barrio I have formed groups of men to balance the representation and groups of children (largely because the latter saw the work as fun and insisted on being included). As a woman it has remained easier for me to mix and feel at ease with the women in the barrio. The culture of La Ciénaga is one in which men and women generally do not mix socially in public. This and the violent nature of the male economy have meant that it has taken me longer to build male friendships and confidence.

Like most modern cities, Santo Domingo is a place of contrasts and extremes. It is a sleek city of shimmering hotels, air conditioned offices, gleaming shopping malls, museums and galleries. It is also a city of chaotic poverty. The spontaneous and overcrowded barrios are found not only inside the city but stretch for long distances along the city's main access roads to the east, north and west. These are different worlds

Figure 2: A Map of the City of Santo Domingo showing the location of La Ciénaga and other sectors mentioned in the text



and they are differently divided. While those who glide up shop escalators and through plush hotel lobbies would not set foot in La Ciénaga, many of those from the barrio are familiar with these other areas of the city. They work in the homes of the wealthy or they walk the streets eking out a living any way they can.

The disparities seem stark and definite.²² Social and physical characteristics mark the barrio apart from wealthy neighbourhoods (such as the established Gazcue or the newer Piantini) and the planned working class sectors such as Villa Juana. Absent infrastructure and limited services define the barrio (and, I will argue, the identities of those who live there). La Ciénaga is a place without transport, waste collection or domestic drainage, a place with scarce supplies of water and electricity, with poor and limited housing, health and education. These are the reasons that few, given a choice, would choose to live within the barrio. Yet, as I have looked more closely at these general comparisons between the barrio and other sectors of the city, the location of the barrio within the city has seemed ever more slippery. Distinctions have seemed to appear and disappear in a manner reminiscent of the way the barrio itself is depicted and then removed from city maps.

The difficulty of comparing the barrio with the wider city is partly a function of the limited statistics. I have already referred to the difficulty with the census. The aggregations and confused categories (the impossibility of separating out the statistics

22 Ciudad Alternativa, 1991, 1998; ENDESA 1992; ONE 1997

which pertain to La Ciénaga alone) present a further complication. There is however a third and deeper difficulty: many of those characteristics and qualities which define La Ciénaga are unmeasured: invisible to current tools and categories. In the process of attempting to locate the barrio within the city, to compare and analyse the status of the barrio in comparison to other districts, unforeseen contradictions have been brought into view.

The distinctions, real and imagined, between the worlds above and below the bridge, and their concrete and emotional effects on those who live in the barrio are a central theme in this thesis. It is worth pausing therefore to look a little more closely at the difficult nature of measurement. I have already discussed the social diversity within the barrio. Looking closely at service comparisons within the city reveals a similarly complex picture. There are, as I have stated, basic facilities which the barrio lacks. There are other services however where the picture is variegated. The differences in service levels between the barrio and other areas of the city are not always as great as the statistics imply. Moreover, the important factors which determine access are not always visible or obvious to those who live above the bridge.

Drainage is an important example of an absent service. Domestic drainage and sanitation is virtually non existent in La Ciénaga. Homes without latrines are not uncommon and one

third of residents have to share communal facilities.²³ While other neighbouring barrios such as Gualey are similar, the situation is one which contrasts starkly with Gazcue or Piantini, and with planned working class sectors such as Villa Juana. Those without drainage or sanitation do exist in these sectors but they are statistically negligible. To be without even a latrine is thus not the case of everyone in La Ciénaga but it is a characteristic which marks the barrio apart from other areas of the city. *I will consider the problem of rubbish, in the barrio, in detail in the second half of this thesis.* Singled out by the barrio residents as one of their most pressing problems, it provides a test case for the new ways of looking at the problems of the inner city which are explored within this thesis.

Housing makes visible the first fissures in the supposed contrasts between those who live above and below the bridge. Viewed from the bridge La Ciénaga is a place of haphazard shacks. Within the barrio the different quality of housing becomes visible. Not all houses are made of cardboard and tin. There are some substantial homes of concrete block and homes are in widely varying states of repair.²⁴ Above the bridge the growing phenomenon of the '*parte atras*' [the place behind], the process by which poorer families squeeze into dwellings of often one poorly constructed and ventilated room behind the

²³ ONE 1997; table 17. In Villa Juana for example 66 out of 8,330 homes are registered as not having sanitation i.e. 0.8 percent.

²⁴ Ciudad Alternativa have developed three categories of houses; those that are 'fit' for habitation, those that need repair and those which need to be completely (re) constructed. Most homes they confess however fall into the grey areas between the categories. [interview 20.05.97]

main house, has proliferated. Increasing numbers live in the interstices; the spatial and statistical gaps of Piantini and Gazcue.

Subterfuge and political agitation have left La Ciénaga with some services that appear to be as good as those in other neighbourhoods. Electricity is an example. In a city where daily power cuts of up to eight hours are the norm, electrical supply is a constant and hotly debated political issue. Indeed, the issue appears too complex for the census to broach. Within the census, tabulations for several areas are missing (for example Villa Juana and Piantini), while almost all homes in Domingo Savio (La Ciénaga) are shown to be connected.²⁵

Almost everyone in La Ciénaga does have electricity. They are illegally connected to the knotted network of wires which runs above the roofs of La Ciénaga. Providing and maintaining connections (those who don't pay up will have their wires removed) is one of the most lucrative micro enterprises in the barrio. It is an expensive and dangerous system. The overloaded transformers and low slung wires cause fires and frequently crash. While power cuts in La Ciénaga are interminable (frequently exacerbated by the informal connections) and stifling, due to the density of the barrio and lack of breeze, they are often shorter than those in other areas of the city. For political reasons it is believed to be expedient for the city authorities to ensure that the barrio remains lit, the televisions

²⁵ ONE 1997; table 18

on. In the particularly troubled and violent period leading up to the 1997 elections the barrio had an almost constant power supply.

Access to health and education services reveal the importance of legal, social and psychological barriers often un-recognised by those who live outside the barrio. Access to health and education within the city is commonly measured by indicators of distance and population per doctor or teacher. La Ciénaga seems comparatively poorly served. Barrio residents describe themselves as the ‘orphans of the public health system’.²⁶ Their measurements are however invisible to those who live above the bridge. Visiting the clinic which serves the barrio is not just dependent on having the time to walk the distance and queue, and the money to buy whatever remedy might be provided. It is about gathering up the courage to visit a place where you will be looked down on and treated as ‘poor’. This is not something on the mental maps of those who live in Gazcue.

Schooling, the difficulties faced in finding a school place for one’s children, illustrates the obstacles faced by those who live in La Ciénaga and the devastating ways in which a simple factor overlooked prevents a parent from ensuring their child’s education. Only a third of primary school aged children in the barrio are in school, compared to eighty percent of the city’s children as a whole.²⁷ Across the Avenida San Francisco Rosario Sanchez is the school of Domingo Savio. Run by the Jesuits, its buildings, painted and

²⁶ Cottam 1993: 93

cared for, the school is a contrast with most of the structures within the barrio. It is one of the best schools within the city and entrance is free. But, it has only 1,600 places for 4,500 children.

The struggle for access however does not start at the school gates in the queue for a place, as I learnt from my comadre Margarita. Her children (like, I later discover, most of the children in the barrio) were not registered at birth; they have no *cédula* (state identity card) and cannot be enrolled for state education. One of the best of the city schools is within the parish walls and yet completely unreachable. Margarita's only resort was to place her children within one of the barrio's private schools. Unregulated and with untrained teachers, these 'schools' are a financial enterprise for astute barrio residents and provide a very poor education. As Margarita's life unravelled in 1996, with the loss of her job, even this strategy had to be abandoned: she could no longer afford to pay the nominal fees.

Between 1989 and 1991, I worked with the Ministry of Education (SEEBAC), in the Dominican Republic. With my employer (CARE, an international non governmental organisation), the ministry and the World Bank we discussed with 'communities' the constraints on primary education. These were perceived (by us) to be the high cost of mandatory school uniforms and books, the poor quality of teaching and the household income foregone from children who would otherwise do small jobs to supplement the

²⁷ Ciudad Alternativa 1991

earnings of their parents. In nearly three years no one at either the community level or within the 'policy' institutions mentioned that significant numbers of those who live within the barrios are unregistered, invisible 'communities'. Discussions conducted within our terms of reference led to crucial gaps in our understanding.

The barrio of La Ciénaga is thus not the place it first appears. Measurements are elusive or misleading and planned interventions (the community project) do not achieve the expected results. To compare the barrio of La Ciénaga with the wider city in which it is located is to further illustrate the complexity of representing the barrio. Residents' lives are shaped by factors invisible within the urban comparisons, statistical portraits and official documents quoted.

Those who live in the barrio are incontrovertibly poor. Their access to the limited services which are available is dependent on time, passion and imagination as they try to weave around the obstacles put in their way. Few of these factors, or their emotional implications, are understood by those who plan solutions. The unsuccessful nature of their interventions, the way in which problems re-emerge seems, in the light of this evidence, to be unsurprising. The need for new questions and a different approach is once again underlined.

I have turned to theory, to more philosophical imaginings, in an attempt to frame new questions which might be taken to the barrio. In the section which follows I look more

closely at the tools and indicators which currently inform the dominant portraits of the barrio. I elucidate some of the problems with these methods and tools before moving on to suggest an alternative way of looking: the experimental tools of my own research.

SHAPE SHIFTING: A THEORETICAL CRITIQUE AND FRAMEWORK

La Ciénaga cannot be represented or described by neat categories. From the perspective of the city plans and maps, the existence of the barrio itself is uncertain. The character of the barrio, the ways and extent to which services are provided, are not encapsulated by technical surveys. The daily realities of those who live in the barrio do not easily translate into the statistics or social indicators which purport to represent them.

Surveys, indicators, statistics and plans; these are the tools of the policy maker, the urban planner, the engineer and the architect. They represent a way of looking, a perspective located 'above the bridge'. While those who represent different viewpoints within the professions, (positioning themselves to the left or right of the political spectrum, on the side of the market or the state, the community or the church), might argue about the relative weight of certain indicators, the methods by which statistics should be collected or categories collated, they leave the fundamental truth or appropriateness of this particular way of looking unquestioned.

I do not wish to argue that the tools currently used are without use. I am however concerned with their limitations, the things which do not fit or are elided. In the search for a different way of looking and representing the barrio I have drawn on developments in post-structural thinking, the practical implications of which have been relatively unexamined. At its core this is a body of work which seeks to question the fixed categories of Enlightenment thinking: the dichotomies of above and below, of theory and practice (the senses and the concrete), and, more recently, but in the same tradition, first and third worlds. Foucault has been at the forefront of this attack. Substantively, Foucault's enquiries have had wide ranging influence on many other scholars and writers from whom I have drawn more closely. I will look briefly at his work, drawing out the methodological implications for my own project before concentrating in more detail on two specific areas, that of the built space and the emotions, asking what new tools the relevant literature might offer in practice.

Foucault's wide ranging body of work provides a theoretical perspective from which current approaches, methods and norms can be problematised. There are three specific ways in which I have found a reading of Foucault to be of use. Firstly, I have drawn on his *historical enquiry* into the origin of current tools and categories, secondly, on his emphasis on *the mobile and discontinuous nature of ideas* (an approach which directly contravenes the dominant emphasis on fixed and stable categories which I find to be so

problematic) and, thirdly and most importantly, on the *innovative methodological approach* which underpins these enquiries.²⁸

an historical enquiry

As an historian of ideas Foucault was interested in both the subject matter of urban policy and in the means by which certain approaches, ideas and perspectives form a mutually re-inforcing system. A system whose methods and approaches have come to be perceived as rational, technically informed and normative. Foucault cites the beginning of the nineteenth century as a moment of transformation. Amongst academics, philosophers and policy makers attention turned to the control of urban space, health, hygiene and the urban environment: the problems of the 'pathogenic city'.²⁹ Such concerns necessitated a new apparatus of surveillance, analysis and intervention. The beginning of the nineteenth century was thus also the moment at which a series of social institutions came into being: statistics were born and welfare bodies were organised at once to police and to provide assistance to those categorised as 'poor'.³⁰ Foucault's research progressed from a study of the institutions and their 'apparatus' or tools, to a more profound questioning of how

²⁸ I am drawing here on a number of Foucault's texts and lectures, in particular; *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963/91), *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969/91) and the series of lectures and essays collected together in *Power/Knowledge* (1980).

²⁹ Foucault 1980: 171, 175

³⁰ Drawing on Foucault's work and methodology, Hacking (1991) has further analysed the development of statistics and Procacci (1991) the development of welfare institutions and urban poverty within this context.

their 'world views' were, in Foucault's own words, 'purified and made scientific', that is, came to dominate.³¹

Foucault's emphasis on the wider social historical context of the tools and categories of urban social planning and policy opens up two further questions pertinent to my own enquiry. Firstly, by analysing the associations between institutions and their methods, Foucault raises questions as to the purpose of their tools. For Foucault urbanisation and policing are synonymous. The state institutions (those I encompass in the term 'above the bridge') become 'geometer kings' in their determination to categorise, compartmentalise and regulate.³² The purpose of these tools is not benign. Foucault illustrates his argument with the example of the community. The community organisation, he argues, is presented as a tool to reach those who are poor or without services, but its real purpose is that of an instrument of control; to order those at the margins of society, ensuring they are within the gaze of the planners and technocrats.³³ In the context of La Ciénaga I will look at the purpose of the community organisation (chapter one). More generally, I am reminded to constantly look underneath those things that pass silently as 'common' sense.

³¹ This progression can be seen in the changes between *the Birth of the Clinic* (1963/91) and *the Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969/91). See in particular 1963/91:83, 90, 107, 120 and 1969/91: 190, 191.

³² Foucault, cited in Gordon 1991: 20

³³ Procacci 1991: 166

Secondly, Foucault's emphasis on temporal context raises the question as to whether those tools and approaches conceived in the nineteenth century can, realistically, address the radically altered terrain of the late twentieth century inner city. The velocity and violence of socio economic change (including the changes in the Dominican decade of crisis to which I referred above), is succinctly summarised by Donna Haraway in what she calls the 'border war'.³⁴ Her analysis is pertinent because she emphasises the ways in which the boundaries and social categories fundamental to social policy have been eroded (the home, the factory, the work place), and the relational nature of these categories.

Haraway argues that the territories of production, reproduction and the imagination have altered. The neat boundaries between home and workplace have been eroded, the family has mutated, identities fractured.³⁵ She links the inner body and self with the socio-economic changes and argues directly that the changes which have taken place are the 'death' of pervading views and approaches to social policy. I have already touched on the way in which La Ciénaga evades these (perhaps) once bordered categories. In the following chapters I will illustrate the rapidly changing nature of the city of Santo Domingo: a place where real wages decline, modes of investment are challenged, public expenditure reductions are acutely visible: a place where 'work' cannot be easily defined,

³⁴ Haraway 1985: 191

³⁵ Haraway 1985: 212- 214

where household structures constantly evolve.³⁶ It seems logical to suppose that, in order to address the problems of the turn of the twentieth century, there is a need to look outside and beyond the nineteenth century tool kit.

on the mobile and discontinuous nature of ideas

An emphasis on this mobility and change is integral to Foucault's work. Foucault commented on the improbable way in which institutions intervened in the nineteenth century and in his own lifetime, as if places, people and ideas remained constant and unchanging.³⁷ There are three ways in which I am concerned with mobility in my own enquiry. Firstly I am interested in the ways that ideas change over time. Whilst this might appear a relatively simple point it is one frequently overlooked in approaches to policy and planning. In La Ciénaga the ways in which attitudes and opinions towards the desalojo change and mutate has proved to be one of the unforeseen and deepest difficulties for city planners and politicians.

Secondly, I am interested in the ways in which ideas circulate within the city. In particular I am interested in how those who live below the bridge in La Ciénaga are caught up within the 'normalised' logic of those above the bridge. During the years I have stayed in the barrio I have watched the way in which perspectives and policies (such as those

³⁶ It could of course be argued that the 'realities' behind the categories which underpin social interventions never existed. What is important to my argument is that these categories imagined or otherwise have informed social policy and planning (as discussed by Fraser 1989) and that the ineradicable nature of the current changes in the terrain make it imperative to think outside these categories.

concerning the desalojo or the community organisation) are by turn rejected and taken on, and in the process changed and embroidered with local meaning. This is a fascinating process which, if observed, reveals much about the range of views and priorities within the barrio. It is a process which emphasises the importance of locating and understanding the barrio within the context of the wider city. It is also a process which raises fundamental questions about methodological approaches to research and planning, particularly the current interest in qualitative approaches.

The debates concerning indicators, questions as to what should be measured and how, and a sense of the 'something missing', have been recognised by planners and researchers. I suggest that a sense of unease with the traditional approaches has dictated the current shift in emphasis from a quantitative to a more qualitative approach.³⁸ A range of participant observation techniques adapted both from anthropology and marketing strategies have been used increasingly by policy makers and planners. Tools include the focus group and methods such as participative action research.³⁹ The dangers that these methods can be used merely to obtain a stamp of approval for projects conceived within old frameworks, or that they fail to recognise the diversity of views within a barrio

³⁷ Foucault 1963/91: 54

³⁸ See the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Handbook, 1993, and country Poverty Reports for an example.

³⁹ Chambers 1992 and Cottam 1994, Tsing 1993: 14-15

(conflicts which later defeat the project or intervention), are gradually being recognised.⁴⁰

These are concerns I share.

An emphasis on the mobility of ideas reveals a greater difficulty with these ‘new’ approaches. I hypothesise that through failing to recognise the importance of change within views and ideas, the response elicited by these methods is too often simply a below bridge repetition of above bridge views. Implicitly it seems that participatory methods currently assume a modern variant of the ‘noble savage’, with access to particular, discrete, local knowledge. I do not reject the potential of qualitative research methods per se (see Annexe A: On Methodology for a more detailed discussion as to how I have developed my own methodology). I do suggest however that the failure to recognise the connections between the inner and the wider city, and the way ideas move between the two, has to date resulted in carrying forward an old philosophy (the search for the stable category, the frozen moment, the list) within the new approaches. This is something I try to get beyond with an emphasis on stories: their shifts and silences.

Thirdly, and closely related, I am interested in the ways in which ideas move, are internalised and differently deployed according to where the speaker is standing. La Ciénaga residents change their perspectives over time, depending on what they hope to gain, and within the day, depending from where they are speaking and to whom. For the

⁴⁰ Blackman 1995: 190. See also Lefebvre’s critique of ‘user planning’ (1974/91: 364) and Spivak’s critique of alternative stories which simply reproduce ‘nativist’ fantasies, as opposed to encouraging

listener there are days when the contradictory nature of responses seems bewildering, often at odds with reality. My first re-encounter with Magaly, a barrio organiser, when I returned to La Ciénaga in 1996 serves as an example.

On my arrival in the city I visited the offices of COPADEBA, the headquarters of the Santo Domingo barrio umbrella organisation. I wanted to let them know of my return and my intention to live again for a while in La Ciénaga. Climbing up a narrow and dark staircase I met Magaly who had been the COPADEBA representative for La Ciénaga three years earlier. She barely went through the formalities of greeting before she launched into an impassioned tale of the hardship the barrio was still suffering, the decree of eviction in place, the daily dread of repeated bulldozings, the impossibility of repairing her or anyone else's home, let alone of building a new one.

A couple of days later I bumped into her again in La Ciénaga and she led me to her home where she wanted to show me the new latrine she had just finished building. As we admired the pristine new concrete structure she pointed out to me the hundreds of new homes visible from the back of her house. Homes which have sprung up on the *arrozal*, the more swamp-like land, in the last three years. She appeared to have forgotten the long description of the impossibility of construction with which she had regaled me in the COPADEBA offices only two days before. Her story of the barrio appeared to depend very much on which part of the city she was standing in when she told it. More

confusingly there was a sense that both stories were true. The decree which prohibits building in anticipation of the forced eviction was still in place: many had not been able to build or had had their constructions torn down. Yet, within the same hundred yards, Magaly had built her new latrine and others had built from scratch, invading the swamp, making a place.

I draw two conclusions from this and many similar incidents. Residents must engage with state policy in a flexible manner, altering their position at intervals, if their needs are to be met. The adoption of above bridge ideas is frequently strategic, an example of the initiative and agency of those who live below. Views also change according to the information available. The adoption of ideas is thus not always a strategy of resistance. At times positions are adopted through ignorance, the partial vision and access that is the below bridge reality. Increasingly I have come to see the importance of listening for these discontinuities, the subtle shifts within what is spoken. I have tried to keep in view this mobility and change which, whether strategically informed or the result of limited information, reveals the complexity of the barrio reality. Theoretically and practically, I am asking how this more polyphonic picture might influence urban policy.

an innovative methodological approach

Foucault's own analysis of historical linkages and mobility is made possible by his methodological approach: the *archaeology* of ideas. 'This analysis is the true secret of

discoveries because it makes us go back to the origin of things'.⁴¹ Foucault's method, emphasising the origins and changes I have discussed above, has influenced my enquiry and constitutes the third and perhaps most important reason that I have found a reading of his work to be of use. Archaeology, or periodisation as Foucault sometimes referred to his method, can best be visualised as the uncovering of layers or the cutting of a transect: different levels of events become accessible and new perspectives are revealed on old problems.⁴² Archaeology keeps different and competing events simultaneously in view: competing ideas and discontinuities are made visible.⁴³ When asked why he continually emphasised these discontinuities in his own work, Foucault responded that his task was not to systematise or generalise but *describe*. In the descriptive process different possibilities and changes are made evident. Then, Foucault insisted, the role of *analysis* begins, analysis of transformations and change.⁴⁴

Such a rapid summary leaves out much of the nuance and contentious nature of Foucault's work. Foucault's analysis has been questioned on historical and geographical grounds. Giddens has questioned the accuracy of his periodisation.⁴⁵ Vaughan has discussed the problems of applying Foucault in different cultural contexts.⁴⁶ Others disagree: Escobar has commented on the importance of Foucault's strategy of writing the

⁴¹ Foucault citing Condillac 1963/91: 94

⁴² Foucault 1980: 67

⁴³ Foucault 1969/91: 169, 174

⁴⁴ Foucault 1969/91: 170-171

⁴⁵ Giddens 1987: 97-98

history of the present for both scholars and resistance movements in developing countries.⁴⁷

From the perspective of my own enquiry such debate, while interesting, is beyond my concern.⁴⁸ I have presented a particular and strategic reading of Foucault's work. I have used his writings to provide a different perspective from which to produce my own questions. Importantly therefore I am not suggesting that Foucault's work provides a total history of what were diverse approaches to urban planning in the nineteenth century. Nor am I able within the confines of my research to discuss the multiple, shifting and complex ways in which aspects of the heritage Foucault describes have filtered through and into contemporary institutions such as the World Bank. References within my research to the nineteenth century should thus be read as a shorthand for a particular, pervasive and continuing approach to urban social policy which excluded the mobile and the discontinuous: approaches which do not keep competing perspectives in view, but rather present themselves as authoritative and singular.

I have drawn on Foucault's writings as a *practice* that is, a method through which questions might be generated and accepted assumptions problematised. I am interested in the imaginative openings offered by Foucault's work. The possibility of different

⁴⁶ Vaughan 1991: 9-12

⁴⁷ Escobar 1984.

⁴⁸ Foucault himself accepted that the historical accuracy of his account was open to question (1963/91: 195)

questions, of altered perspectives and approaches which come into view, of shapes which start to shift.

Built Space and the Emotions

Audre Lorde insisted that ‘the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house’, arguing that for real change to occur, there is a need to stand outside accepted definitions and structures, to do something different.⁴⁹ In the search for new perspectives on persistent problems I have concentrated on two issues not normally included in the nineteenth century tool box: the built space and the emotions. They provide the archaeological tools for my own discoveries. I use the term built space to refer to the physical spaces, buildings and infrastructure of the city. By emotions I refer to the senses: those feelings which determine action, punctuate conversation and provide the well spring of creativity. I am interested in how people feel about where they live and what they need: these are the inner tensions to which my title refers.

The built space is a theoretical silence in most writing on the city. The writings of Castells, whilst pathbreaking in their attempt to understand the social processes that shape the city and urbanisation, exemplify the problem. The city for Castells, and the majority of urban sociologists, planners and thinkers who have followed, is both the

framework of analysis (that is, the setting for social action) and the goal.⁵⁰ Urban social movements for example are conceived of as struggling within the setting of the urban backdrop, over the occupation of the space and the use and exchange values of buildings, infrastructure and services.⁵¹ The built space is thus present as an independent object which is fought over and as a context. It is not part of an inter-active process, a variable that exerts its own effects.⁵²

I will argue that the city is more than context and that the built space actively and independently influences the lives, thoughts, aspirations and movements of those who live there. I suggest that the failure of the academic, the planner and the policy maker to incorporate and interpret the built space as an independent source of agency, as 'having a life of its own', is a cause of either mistaken or partial understandings of both the individuals and the social structures which reside within a space. This failure leads to the delivery of inappropriate service solutions.

It is within the texts of architects and those urban geographers influenced by the philosophical writings of Henri Lefebvre, that the social, political and economic effects of

⁴⁹ 'For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.' (Lorde 1984: 112)

⁵⁰ Castells 1976: 179, 180, Castells 1983: 67, 69. See also Drakakis Smith 1987, Gilbert 1981, Hall 1990, Harloe 1977, Harvey 1985.

⁵¹ Castells 1983: 189-190, 319-320

⁵² It is important to note that this is not a position which Castells has modified in his later work, despite an interest in 'the power of identity' and its formation, see for example Castells 1997.

buildings are considered.⁵³ In *The Production of Space* Lefebvre noted the general fault with urban analysis, that the city is obvious as presence/absence, yet it is never addressed directly.⁵⁴ Lefebvre, like Castells, sees the city as 'setting' and 'stake', but in addition he shows an interest in the tangible sense of the independent force of built things.⁵⁵

In his exploration of the independent force of built things Lefebvre considers how the built space affects the senses and, through the senses, action and a way of life. Buildings, Lefebvre observes, are 'poetry'; like language they exert effects.⁵⁶ These effects are both sensual and practical. The cherished city, for example the 'great hymn' that is Venice, affects the senses of the residents promoting inventiveness and revelry.⁵⁷ By contrast, inappropriate spatial morphology is seen to be a key factor determining the failure of social projects. Thus Lefebvre argues that experiments in communal living and the construction of urban communities have repeatedly failed through their use of spaces which are inappropriate to their purposes.⁵⁸ This is a dimension of analysis notably missing in Castells' work.

⁵³ I have also been influenced by and drawn on the writings of Barthes 1956/93, Boyer 1994, de Certeau 1974/84, Hayden 1995, Kovel 1988, Markus 1993, Pile 1996, Sennett 1993, 1994, Vidler 1992

⁵⁴ Lefebvre 1974/91: 271

⁵⁵ Lefebvre 1974/91: 380-381

⁵⁶ Lefebvre 1974/91: 224, 227

⁵⁷ Lefebvre 1974/91: 77. Similarly Lefebvre posited that anarchic spaces are the home to anarchic behaviour (1974/91: 212-213). Whilst I question whether the correlation is not at times too deterministic in Lefebvre's writings, I do accept his general premise that the aesthetics of the built space have concrete effects.

⁵⁸ Lefebvre 1974/91: 380

The built space is conceived by Lefebvre to have history, memory and dreams imbricated within its fabric. These inner qualities of the built space also affect the senses. It is a two way relationship. Feelings are ascribed to a building according to its function or role in the life of an individual (feelings of homeliness in the house, of spirituality in the cathedral). More contentiously, Lefebvre hints that buildings develop their own unconscious which acts upon the unconscious of those who move or live within a given space.⁵⁹ Importantly, Lefebvre recognises that this process works on a number of levels. A building is appraised simultaneously according to the dreams, preconceptions and plans of the space held by the onlooker.⁶⁰ Within La Ciénaga, I will show the important role of ideals and aspirations in residents' appraisals of public and private spaces. Feelings of what a space 'should be like' have repercussions which go beyond the architectural or the emotional. They are factors which cannot be included in any analysis which ignores the impact of the built environment.

The histories and memories contained within the built space are characterised by Lefebvre in a manner which has obvious similarities with Foucault's concept of archaeology. Lefebvre writes of the sediment of perceptions and the horizon of meanings within the built space.⁶¹ Like Foucault, Lefebvre was concerned by the ease with which these meanings and perceptions could be forgotten, excluded or, in more extreme circumstances,

⁵⁹ Lefebvre 1974/91: 36

⁶⁰ Lefebvre 1974/91: 38, 39

violently erased.⁶² Pertinent examples include the way in which planners and politicians change the norms around housing, ignoring the ways in which the idea of 'dwelling' contains more aspects than shelter, with negative consequences for residents.⁶³ Attempts to cover over or erase previous histories (Lefebvre used the example of the monument, an example of which I will discuss in more detail in chapter three), have their own dangers. Lefebvre posited that, sooner or later, the histories and emotions associated with that which has been obliterated emerge with negative consequences for the new project or construction.⁶⁴ I am reminded of Sennett's reference to 'themes unquiet and persistent' and ask whether the failure to consider this potential role of the built space might not be another reason that projects fail and problems re-emerge.⁶⁵

Lefebvre wrote of the way in which the dominant gaze of the planner 'flattens'. In a similar way to which Barthes noted that the structure of a building, composed of countless segments, interlinked, crossed and divergent, appears to be a pure line when viewed from afar,⁶⁶ Lefebvre noted that a multiplicity of conflicting views within and on the city are eclipsed within the mechanisms of technical planning. Using phrases such as the deception of coherence and the violence of abstraction, Lefebvre at once described

⁶¹ Lefebvre 1974/91: 222, 226. See also de Certeau's description of the 'accumulated times that can be 'unfolded' 1974: 108

⁶² Lefebvre 1974/91: 110, 177, 221, 228-229. It is important not to over emphasise the links to Foucault: Lefebvre criticised Foucault for failing to distinguish theoretical space from practical space (1974/91:4).

⁶³ Lefebvre 1974/91: 164, 316-317

⁶⁴ Lefebvre 1974/91: 226-227

⁶⁵ Sennett 1994: 25. See also Kovel's discussion of the repressed within the built space (1988: 58).

very real difficulties with current approaches to the built environment and developed metaphors to describe wider political and intellectual processes of which the built space is part.⁶⁷ He developed the concept of the grid to illustrate by contrast the alternative way in which both ideas and the built space might be represented. The grid stands for the permeability and co-existence of spaces, an active idea of movement, connections and re-connections.⁶⁸ Since no idea should be seen as stable or immutable, Lefebvre also drew attention to the way in which the grid has been used for planning purposes to order and control.⁶⁹ I have already commented on the ways in which the imperatives of a coherent story about the inner city lead to the construction of fictions.

Lefebvre's work is lyrical and suggestive: his book provokes ideas, it does not provide a coherent approach to how the built space might theoretically or practically be re-considered. History, memory, emotion: the importance of thinking differently about the built space is brought to the foreground. These are issues which resonate with the residents of La Ciénaga: their thinking about the spaces of the barrio and the city is both rich and emotional as I will show in the chapters which follow.

⁶⁶ Barthes 1956/82: 239

⁶⁷ Lefebvre 1974/91: 92, 289, 316-317

⁶⁸ Lefebvre 1974/91: 125, 192, 196

⁶⁹ In Latin America the grid has been used as a means to order plunder (Lefebvre 1974/91: 151-152). In the chapters which follow I will develop the idea of the grid, remaining mindful both of its positive uses and of the warnings of previous historical legacies.

If the emotional impact of the built space is not central to urban theory, it is a subject explored in literature. In *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison powerfully conveys the torn lives of the Breedlove family, through a description of their home and their furnishings. The abandoned house conveys to the family a sense of their own ugliness. A hated piece of furniture produces a fretful malaise that asserts itself throughout the house. Like a sore tooth whose pain pervades other parts of the body, Morrison describes the way the environment (the built house and its contents) affects all areas of the inhabitants' lives, feelings and sense of identity.⁷⁰ Other writers have conveyed the similar effects of the public spaces of the city.⁷¹ These are writings that resonate with the reader; we know that our surroundings affect us in the ways described, that these emotions determine other areas of our lives. How strange then that these should be areas ignored by the policy maker.

From a feminist theoretical standpoint, other women such as bell hooks, have also written about the power of built spaces as an opening into a wider examination of the political role of the emotions. hooks' writings link objects, the built space and the imagination; '...objects are not without spirit. As living things they touch us in unimagined ways'.⁷² She suggests that spaces carry a sense of history (emotional memories), a community

⁷⁰ 'You could hate a sofa, of course that is, if you could hate a sofa. But it didn't matter. You still had to get together \$4.80 a month. If you had to pay \$4.80 a month for a sofa that started off split, no good, and humiliating you couldn't take any joy in owning it. And that joylessness stank, pervading everything...' (Morrison 1979/90: 26-27).

⁷¹ See for example the collection of writings edited by Heron 1993

⁷² hooks 1990: 103, 104

aesthetic, and that they have power over the lives of individuals. hooks centres the emotions, the way in which an individual experiences reality through the realm of the senses, and argues that there is a need to write the emotions into policy, both to challenge the way that policy 'looks' at its subjects and to creatively transform what it recommends.⁷³

I have thus drawn on the work of hooks and other feminist writers in the search for a theoretical standpoint from which to critically re-incorporate the emotions. I have also drawn on those feminists whose work is spliced with psychoanalytic theory and women who write outside the Western canon.⁷⁴ Like them, I am concerned to re-incorporate the emotions in the widest sense in order to better understand the people and places with whom I work. Emotions are understood here as the complex web of determinations which influence action, the pleasures and pains of the senses and internal feelings that, amongst other things, provoke an individual's or a group's intervention in the concrete. Feminist writers have emphasised the importance of re-incorporating, although not assimilating, the realm of the senses.⁷⁵ The result is a layered understanding of the individual and the social which is not dissimilar to Lefebvre's understanding of the built space and Foucault's archaeological approach to social policy in general.

⁷³ 'Seeing here is meant metaphysically as heightened awareness and understanding...' hooks 1990: 112

⁷⁴ Anzaldúa 1987, Butler 1990, Christian 1990, Haraway 1985, hooks 1990, 1994, Irigaray 1977/91, Kristeva 1980/82, de Lauretis 1984, 1990, Lorde 1984, Minh-ha 1989, Spivak 1987

⁷⁵ Spivak in particular confronts the issues of representation and criticises those who seek to 'recover consciousness' in order to fix the other in yet another 'theoretical fiction' (Spivak 1987: 159-160, 171-172).

Summarising the significant shifts which have taken place in feminist thinking since the 1980s, de Lauretis traces the influence of Foucault, psychoanalysis and the writings of women of colour.⁷⁶ She argues that the result has been a re-conceptualisation of the nature of power and the subject. A re-conceptualization which can accept contradictions and the inherently contextual and mobile nature of the emotions.

‘The understanding of feminism as a community whose boundaries shift and whose differences can be expressed - re-negotiated through connections both interpersonal and political, goes hand in hand with a particular understanding of individual experience as the result of a complex bundle of determinations and struggles, a process of continuing renegotiation of external pressures and internal resistances...’⁷⁷

The idea of a ‘bundle of determinations’ has obvious parallels with the discussion above regarding the way in which the residents of La Ciénaga change their stories over time and depending on where they are standing. Here however I am more interested in the role of ‘internal resistances’. de Lauretis explicitly argues that the subject (like the built space) is made up of sediments of emotion, fragments of feeling, other objects and other subjects, all constantly in movement. Layers of emotion influence the individual and their interactions with others, often in unexpected ways.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ de Lauretis 1990: 131

⁷⁷ de Lauretis 1990: 137

⁷⁸ de Lauretis 1990: 136. Freud’s writings (1930/91) consider directly what happens to the individual and the collective when these emotions are ignored or repressed. Freud argues that, eventually, those things repressed start to show: disorder and violence are the result. This is a point I will develop further in chapter one in my discussion of the ‘community’. Here, once again, I note the parallels with Lefebvre’s

To summarise, drawing on the work of de Lauretis and the feminist theorists to whom she refers, the emotions can be conceptualised in two ways. They are at once an analytic tool for understanding practical change in the life of the subject and a methodological tool, providing what de Lauretis refers to as a well spring of creativity. The practical and the methodological overlap. To centre the emotions is thus to listen in a different way (both to silent secrets and to desires), to be holistically aware of the factors which influence people's lives and thus decisions (that is to include emotional as well as social, economic and environmental factors), and to be aware of the way emotional states can transform one sort of feeling or reaction into another. (The similarities between including the emotions as a tool of academic research and the process of psychoanalysis can be seen here; a methodological similarity I examine in more detail in chapter four.)

When the emotions are made 'visible' in this manner, the academic and the policy maker are able to think and work in a different way.⁷⁹ (It is important to emphasise, with reference to my research, that an inclusion of the emotions has enabled me both to frame different questions and to consider different material solutions in the barrio.)

hooks' work again serves as an illustration of what I am describing. In her essay *Outlaw Culture*, hooks uses emotions to write in a different way which serves her intention to build on the emotions as a transformative tool. hooks celebrates the emotions; '...things that excite and liberate the mind'. The reader is drawn in by the rhythm of the text and

characterisations of the built spaces which can temporarily be 'flattened' or homogenised but whose more complex and changing nature and consequences eventually emerge.

sense of surprise at hooks' often uncomfortable honesty. It is an effect she uses consciously, talking within the text of the 'unforgettable' nature of a personal story told with trust.⁸⁰ The effect is a heightened awareness and understanding; new ways of looking are brought about through an incorporation of the senses, a dislocation of once closely bordered spheres.⁸¹

To highlight the emotions is thus to make visible an array of motivations and tensions which, while they are rooted in the concrete and every day, are very different from the variables and concerns emphasised by the policy maker. In the chapters which follow I ask questions which touch the emotions in order to look underneath explanations, to incorporate a realm which better represents reality and in an effort to build on their transformative nature. It is not an easy project and pieces of the jigsaw remain evasive. To concentrate in my conversations in La Ciénaga on the concrete often had the effect of provoking long stories of emotion. To turn directly to discuss these emotions, to unravel apparent contradictions, all too often results in the story teller reverting to the concrete.⁸²

⁷⁹ de Lauretis 1990: 145

⁸⁰ hooks 1994: 2-3

⁸¹ hooks 1990: 112

⁸² To draw again on literature, I am reminded of Virginia Woolf's project of life writing: should it be about facts, or about the soul; it is difficult to 'write directly about the soul. Looked at, it vanishes'. Woolf writing in her diary, February 1926 (Lee: 1996). This conundrum is situated within a wider modernist framework questioning what might be seen as incontrovertible truth.

Emotions by their nature are mobile and elusive. How they might realistically inform policy is a difficult and open question, one I keep constantly in mind.⁸³

To summarise, I have drawn on a number of theoretical perspectives, integrating them into my research in three ways. Firstly I have used a reading of Foucault to provide a post structural framework. This framework has provided both the context within which I have read and problematised the work of other theorists, and the methodological inspiration for my own empirical work in the barrio. Secondly I have drawn on a literature outside the accepted (although changing) remit of urban policy. Drawing on the texts of feminists and spatial theorists, concentrating on the built spaces and the emotions, I have been able to include new subject matter in my research and alter the perspective from which questions can be asked. Thirdly, I have used theory with what Butler would call 'strategic purpose'.⁸⁴ In approaching empirical problems (the subject matter of the second half of this thesis), I have selected texts that might disrupt understandings of the concrete, leading to new imaginings and solutions: my practical concern. I have drawn inspiration from those theorists who exhilarate with their poetry

⁸³ de Lauretis has reminded her readers of how the history of Saussure's *langue* and Levi Strauss' *structure* created an idea that a system of 'rules' existed and must be obeyed if one is to communicate. Within this system, current ideas on the multiple systems of power were 'unthinkable', yet they are now not only accepted but commonly understood and deployed (1984: 3). By analogy, I may not currently be able to imagine how the polyphonic, shifting picture I advocate might influence policy, but I am able to imagine that this possibility exists.

⁸⁴ Butler 1990: 4

as much as with their substance (Kristeva, hooks, de Certeau, Lefebvre), and kept the question as to how one might write at the forefront of my concerns.

Shape shifting

The shape shifter is a familiar figure in the Caribbean: of Yoruba origin, the legendary trickster can conjure up as many different figures and manifestations as the sea has waves.⁸⁵ A story teller, a bricoleur, using whatever is to hand the shape shifter challenges epistemological as well as narrative shapes. The shape shifter is by turns man and woman, benign and malevolent, local yet unlocated. Importantly the shape shifter is part of the story: s/he can be duped.

My own research has shared the spirit and the method of the shape shifter. I have collected the stories of those who live in La Ciénaga. Re-telling these stories in the chapters that follow, I am listening for the detail, the silences, the gaps and the contradictions. I return again and again to the old narratives repeated in the barrio, to their root metaphors or recurring themes, and attempt to ask different questions.⁸⁶

In the barrio I ask what it means to live in an ugly, cast off place, to inhabit a house of flimsy walls where there is no space to hide. I start in chapter one by looking at the

⁸⁵ See Melville 1990

⁸⁶ It should be noted that there are close parallels between those narratives I refer to as stories and Foucault's use of the term discourse. The stories told within the barrio are provocative and often incomplete, yet they exert practical effects. Others have weight because of their intimate relationship with institutions of power, such as the family. Both these factors would be used by Foucault to define discourse. I have however purposively retained the language of stories which has no meaning within the lexicons of academia or urban policy. This can be contrasted with the way in which 'discourse' has been colonised and lost its radical meaning. Using the term 'story' has additionally enabled me to include fragments that could not be easily be interpreted as discourse. Whether these stories must transform themselves into discourses, with close relations to institutions in order to have any meaning or transformative power remains an open question and one I consider more carefully in chapter four.

stories told about the public spaces of the barrio (the cañadas and the callejones). I examine the way these spaces affect the emotions of those who live there and the way in which these feelings and associated sense of identity affect the possibility of social organisation (the community). In chapter two I turn to the private spaces of home. In a barrio which is a hated place the home becomes a refuge, yet the reality of overcrowded spaces, shabby possessions and often intense domestic violence can make the home feel more like a prison. Flimsy walls seem to echo a fragile sense of self. Some residents turn inside themselves, hiding within their dreams or states of depression. Others dream of escape, of a home above the bridge. In chapter three I therefore look at the city above the bridge, the context in which the barrio and the residents' homes are judged to be lacking, outside the 'norm'. With the residents I visit the monuments of the city and re-consider the history and stories the city of Santo Domingo tells about itself; the place of the barrio within the city

Stories are the emotional and structural scaffolding of this thesis and, in the second half of the thesis, I start by focusing on the stories themselves. In chapter four, with the help of María, the witch (the barrio's consummate shape shifter), I look at the purpose of telling stories: their ability to reveal and to heal. I start to look at the implications of both my method and of the findings uncovered in the first half of the book, for the concrete recurring problem of the barrio: waste and absent infrastructure. I have stated from the outset that I am interested in the possibility of new solutions that might address the

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My own research has shared the spirit and the method of the shape shifter. I have collected the stories of those who live in La Ciénaga. Re-telling these stories in the chapters that follow, I am listening for the detail, the silences, the gaps and the contradictions. I return again and again to the old narratives repeated in the barrio, to their root metaphors or recurring themes, and attempt to ask different questions.⁸⁶

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CHAPTER ONE: THE BARRIO

‘If it turned out that the city had an underground and a repressed life, and hence an unconscious of its own....’

Henri Lefebvre⁸⁷

In which I show the ways that the public spaces of the barrio (the cañadas and the callejones) affect the emotions of those who live there, and the ways in which these feelings and associated sense of identity affect the possibility of social organisation: the community.

Reaching La Ciénaga is not easy, despite its central geographic location. The performance begins with the taxi drivers: they are always unwilling to take me and, as dusk falls, almost all refuse. Eventually, after several false starts, someone is convinced. We set off and the familiar conversation starts. There are two themes. The first about violence, the physical danger, my limited chances of survival. The second about how worthless, useless, dirty, and lazy the residents of La Ciénaga are; ‘*gente que no sirve para nada*’, ‘people who aren’t useful for anything’. I try not to listen; the first line of conversation is so insistent it engenders feelings of real fear and vulnerability that I try to keep down, the second sickens.

⁸⁷ *The Production of Space*, 1974/91: 36

The entrances to the barrio on the Avenida San Francisco Rosario Sanchez are still guarded by the marines. They watch who comes and goes; they make sure in particular that no construction materials are carried into the barrio, according to the terms imposed by the decree of eviction. These entrances on the higher ground of Los Guandules are wide enough for vehicles to enter. The taxi slowly and bumpily makes its way down the unpaved streets. I am dropped outside the police station. The infamous *Cinco Esquinas* [five corners] is a thoroughfare, it is the easiest access route in and out of the barrio. The police post, a large pawn shop and a barbers make it the site of constant meetings and remonstrances. The merengue music which is played loudly by all the competing enterprises adds to the sense of mayhem. On this occasion a barely dressed, bruised and very drunk woman is trying to denounce her husband who, she claims, has attacked her. The policemen on duty are busy trying to play dominos. Occasionally they look up, address her by name, and suggest she goes home to sort it out.

This is the place the taxi leaves me, and I begin my walk down to La Ciénaga. Since I am carrying an old, heavy slide projector I ask one of the plain clothed 'secret police' who is hanging about outside, if he would like to help me. He laughs and jokes, quite interested in the idea. He is in his late teens, bored and I am someone different to flirt with. '*Claro mami*', he agrees with a rather insinuating phrase and gaze. All of this ends rather abruptly when I explain where I want him to carry the projector to; 'am I crazy?' he asks, 'it's much too dangerous to go there, even the police don't go there'. Patiently I start to explain that I have been there before, in fact I was there all last week, but I had to

go to another part of the city to get the slide projector, now I just need a little help carrying it. He feels out manoeuvred. The problem is, he explains, that it's muddy down there, its been raining, he doesn't want to ruin his new jeans.

At this point the teenage daughter of Margot (my *comadre*) arrives with her friend. They greet me warmly, kiss my cheeks, grab half my things and we set off. I am immediately immersed in another world; the plots and doings of their day. It feels normal and safe as we walk down another steep and stony 'street' to the side of the police post, turn right at the *escalones*, the new cement stairway, and left at the bottom along one of the main arteries of La Ciénaga, now no longer wide enough for a vehicle to pass. It isn't far, but it is steep and muddy and the process of greetings and other exchanges takes time. It is a walk of perhaps thirty minutes. For me, it is a passage from feelings of vulnerability to those of relief and pleasure, to be amongst people I know.

*

It is May 1996 and we are meeting again in Yonesa's house. (Yonesa coordinates one of the groups in La Ciénaga with whom I have worked in previous years). It is hot and crowded as teenagers gather in the back doorway and children squabble on the dirt floor. Adults, children and roosters constantly come and go. Everyone talks at once, laughing, arguing, gesturing with vigour, with aggression. As interest mounts the numbers who

stand squashed in the front doorway grow. The television is unplugged, the slide projector connected.

I have brought with me the slides I took when I stayed in the barrio three years ago. I begin to show them, starting with the top of the barrio (a view from the bridge), descending through the wider unpaved streets of Los Guandules (the path I have just walked) to the callejones and cañadas of La Ciénaga. There are shrieks of laughter. The women hurl insults at each other: Margarita is fatter, Margot older, Alba uglier; another is wrinkled like an old horse.

A history of the last three years is spontaneously told in the form of personal anecdotes and incidents. People are recognised and identified: Jaqueline whose two children have died, Aracelis who went 'mad' and moved away, Adela whose house has burnt down. Slides of María the witch (whom three years ago nobody claimed to know), are greeted with uproarious shouts; '*..ay la vieja culu'a*'; 'ah the old cunt', accusations that she eats children, amazement that she is someone I know. There are curious silences too: no-one appears to recognise my friend Lupina or know where she has gone, and the men, depicted playing dominos and having their manicures in the callejones, are never named. These are gaps I can only understand much later.

Stories about the barrio itself are less forthcoming. In contrast to the personal stories, which are recounted with undisputed detail, memories and recognition of places seem to

be uncertain. Women argue over the history of the *play* [baseball pitch] and the *arrozal* [rice field]; which was it that became a lagoon after hurricane David and later a pumpkin patch. There is confusion about the suspension bridges that run over our heads at either end of the barrio. Their official names are unknown and, although the form of each bridge is quite different, nobody is quite sure which photograph is which bridge.

I continue to show slides of the callejones. Then an image of the collapsing houses.

There are gasps of shock; '*mira que diablo!*'. The whole tone of the conversation changes and although the houses surround us they are discussed as something distant, of another place. '*Que mal vive la gente*', '...how badly people live' someone mutters amidst nervous laughter. Margarita asks me what people said in London when I showed the slides.⁸⁸ The question carries a tangible sense of shame, and a feeling of being exposed, discovered. This reaction is something other than one of visual confusion or a lack of recognition. This is a refusal to recognise the immediate locality.

I leave the image on the wall and slowly the women begin to remonstrate with each other challenging the reactions of denial. One lives in one of the houses, why doesn't she say so out loud. Another recognises a woman just visible in the window. Gradually, the

⁸⁸ '*No dijeron que allá que mal viven la gente?*'; 'weren't they surprised at how badly people live there (ie. La Ciénaga)?' When I tell Andres Navarro of Ciudad Alternativa about this reaction to my slides (the response in Yonesa's house is repeated on five further slide showings I arrange in other parts of the barrio), he tells me of his similar experience when he has taken people from La Ciénaga to other barrios as part of his work. They are always shocked by the precariousness of these other barrios where conditions are often better, or at least no worse, than those in La Ciénaga. He too has realised that those who live in La Ciénaga simply don't see their own barrio.

attempts of those present to differentiate and distance themselves from the images of total indigence, projected onto the wall, collapse.

In this chapter I want to further explore the women's reactions to their barrio. What does it mean to live amongst these buildings and places, whose images shock their own residents? What are the repercussions of living in a place you refuse to recognise? In the first part of this chapter I want to look at the stories told about the public places of the barrio (the callejones and the cañadas). I will concentrate on the feelings these places evoke and the social practices and modes of behaviour they give rise to. In the second part of the chapter I will concentrate in more detail on the forms of social organisation which exist within these spaces, questioning the possibilities of community, of organisation to change the places which must be currently denied. First however I turn to this process of denial: what it means, how it operates.

DISSIMULATING PLACES

Much later, on that same May evening, I asked a group of women who remained talking in Yonesa's house, which part of the barrio they consider to be the best. To my initial surprise they chose the same part of the barrio from which they had earlier tried to disassociate themselves: the part where they live;

'...el parte mejor ? Yo diría este porque se '...the best part? I would say this one
disimula.' because one dissimulates.'

Survival is based on pretense. The 'dissimulation' to which the women refer can take the form of physical gestures and/or spoken denial (the refusal to recognise the slide images or to admit residence within the barrio). It is a technique for quotidian survival through which you block out the reality of the surrounding built environment.

In the hostile environment of La Ciénaga, the 'best' place is your small locality, the *pedazito*, or corner, in which you feel familiar and safe. Outside this place you have to be on your guard. Tití explains to me how, when she turns past the corner, '*pongo mi cara dura*', 'I put on my hard face'. Her impassive visual mask protects her both from noticing her environment and the taunts of the *tigueres* she walks past; 'a smile costs', she tells me grimly. The importance in the inner city of physical gestures which command 'respect' has been widely commented upon. Tracing the historical development of such gestures, Sennett discusses the particular characteristics of the modern crowd and the ways in which the physical presence of other human beings within congested spaces can feel threatening. New Yorkers, he writes, adopt a certain way of walking which avoids eye contact and hence social inter action with those they pass: a strategy of 'defensive

destimulation'.⁸⁹ In La Ciénaga defensive ways of walking become habit, put on like an overcoat, when the familiar corner is left behind.

Physical gestures express an emotional response. This emotional response is not commented on in the literature, yet is central to understanding the barrio. You pretend to block out not only what you see (the built space) and hear (the provocative taunts and comments of other residents), but also the feelings associated with the place: feelings of anguish and shame. To 'dissimulate' is to construct an emotional barrier which makes tolerable the reality of living in pungent mud, litter and violence. It is a fragile protection mechanism. One which is at once consciously recognised and spoken of as an invention, but for reasons of sanity must be maintained.

<i>'...uno se enferma de pensar en los problemas entonces uno se pone a sentirse bien.'</i>	<i>'...one would make oneself ill thinking about these problems so you just make yourself feel alright.'</i> (Yonesa)
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<i>'No podemos dedicar mucho tiempo a pensar en el problema ya que nos vamos a enfermar.'</i>	<i>'We can't give ourselves much time to think of the problem because we will make ourselves ill.'</i> (Alba)
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⁸⁹ Sennett 1994: 21, 366. See also Bhabha 1995.

To think of the reality would be to make oneself ill. Inside yourself you therefore try not to think about the physical ugliness and horror that surrounds you. In response to those from outside the barrio you lie about where you are from. Both these external and internal responses are learned in reaction to the harsh experiences of living in La Ciénaga.

The women describe the days when it is raining and it seems almost too much to bear to have to walk down to your muddy, flooded home below; *‘lo más infeliz que hay’*, ‘the most unhappy [place] there is’. They talk of the feelings of shame involved in admitting to friends and family who live above the bridge that La Ciénaga is your home, your barrio.

<i>‘Cuando vemos el barrio nos da</i>	‘When we see the barrio it makes us
<i>verguenza, nos da verguenza de decir de</i>	ashamed and upset, it makes us ashamed to
<i>dónde somos ya que cuando vamos a</i>	say where we’re from because when we go
<i>comprar un traste no nos quieren fiar.’</i>	to buy things they don’t want to give us a
	loan.’ (Yonesa)

This sense of shame is rooted in concrete experience, the practical consequences that come from admitting where you live. Even the smallest interaction with those above the bridge, such as the attempt to buy goods in the city under the commonly used hire purchase arrangements to which Yonesa refers, entails a process of humiliation. In dealing with those who live above the bridge, the residents of La Ciénaga always refer loosely to the central avenida San Francisco Rosario Sanchez, hoping it will be thought that they live in the better houses on the higher ground of Los Guandules. When applying for a job

they must invent a different address altogether if they are to have any chance of success. Those who live in La Ciénaga dissimulate not just because they dislike their environment, but because they are embarrassed at being associated with the dirt and poverty of the barrio. They know that above the bridge they are thought to be as worthless, untrustworthy and dangerous as the place they live. The association limits their chances of employment, of being served in a shop, of receiving attention in a hospital.

Feelings of shame, disgust and exasperation are evoked by the condition of the barrio: the presence of dilapidated housing and garbage, the lack of infrastructure and services. Above the bridge this cast off place is associated with cast off people. Below the bridge this association is known and painfully felt. Residents try to distance themselves physically and emotionally from their environment with varying degrees of success. Even as the place itself is mentally blocked out and the allegations refuted, the daily consequences and effects of living there are absorbed. It as if the collapsing walls (dissimulated in my slide showing) subcutaneously secrete a sense of self, one which is as fragile as the constructions of the barrio. It sometimes seems as if the barrio's residents cannot always separate *themselves* from the place they live. The continual references, both direct and metaphorical, to the *basura* are illustrative; I am never quite sure whether it is people, delinquency or the physical garbage that is being referred to. I examine these associations between the places of the barrio and the feelings of those who live there, in more detail in the sections that follow.

To discuss the practice of dissimulation is to reveal two important aspects of the barrio and the way it is lived. Firstly, the impact of the built environment and its effects on those who live there is foregrounded. The hated place evokes uncomfortable emotions. Both the place and the emotions must be blocked out: thus the built environment affects physical and social behaviour (the way you move, the lies that must be told). Secondly (and implicitly related to the first point), the built space affects the possibility of social relations. The need to dissimulate involves blocking out both people and places and makes necessary a particularly defensive form of social interaction. In the next section I want to look in more detail at this social interaction. I consider the force of two particular areas of public space within the barrio (the cañada and the callejón).

The Cañada⁹⁰ and The Callejón

The cañadas weave through the barrio, in places muddy gullies, at other points open sewers. Like the callejones, the twisting lanes and alleyways, they are labyrinthine spaces, illicit path systems associated with waste, dirt and danger. The two most denigrated places in the barrio, the callejón and the cañada, define what it means to live in La Ciénaga and the way the barrio must be lived. These places are the setting, and frequently the cause, of those accumulated bitter experiences that scar the body, bruise

⁹⁰ the cañada
transl. [OSD] a gully
defn. [OED] a deep gutter, sink or drain, a large knife
'that gully also known as the threshold' Oedipus

and fracture the emotions. They are the places most closely associated with all that the residents most wish to block out (dissimulate) and they seem to dominate daily lives and conversations.

The callejón and the cañada are despised both for their architectural form and for the particular ways of living that seem to be embedded within the physical constructions of the barrio. The life of the callejón is illustrative. The pathways and spaces which might have been streets are paved with accreted garbage. Muddy stretches, with deep, infested puddles, the callejones are the last places to dry after the frequent tropical downpours. Labyrinthine, confusing mazes, they also hide certain forms of social behaviour. Both these structural and social factors make the callejones the most hated places to live.

'*Si tuviera calles...*', 'If only there were streets...' is a constant lament in La Ciénaga. It is a cry not only for streets, but for infrastructure, engineering, drainage and waste disposal. The callejones seem an inversion of modern planning, the spaces left over *after* the construction of homes. Sennett has described the way in which the medieval city grew around the cathedral: as people constructed and traded, blocking spaces with impunity, their actions made the boundaries between streets and walls appear permeable.⁹¹ The residents of La Ciénaga want to be able to move with ease through their barrio yet a structurally chaotic process very similar to that described in the medieval city makes this impossible. The callejones narrow, widen again and twist at irregular intervals. Walking,

it is necessary to hop from one dry stone to another, dodging the traders and other passers by. It is hard to maintain a sense of direction, and common to reach an abrupt end where the callejón is blocked by someone's wall, perhaps one that wasn't there yesterday.

The lack of ease inspired by the callejón is however not only physical, but mental. The callejones both transgress the physical grid of modern planning and the social and legal norms that residents feel might bring them a peaceful existence. The narrower, more labyrinthine spaces are threatening: the dangerous homes to the illegal and violent activities which underpin the barrio's economy. The power of individuals and barrio gangs is marked by the constantly shifting boundaries and paths that they establish. One year the most dangerous place is behind Juana's colmado, another it is behind the arrozal. In 1996 a billiard hall interrupted what had, three years earlier, been one of the few 'streets' wide enough for a vehicle to pass. Billiards had become the fashionable recreation for the tigueros of the barrio. Others, who relied on the wider 'street' for access, were powerless to stop the construction. Such shifting spaces contribute to the mobile nature of the barrio to which I referred in my introduction.

The billiard hall is an interesting (and direct) illustration of what the architectural historian Vidler has called 'vagabond architecture'. Vagabond architecture is a make shift architecture, one which is continually changing; 'that which transforms the passage into a

⁹¹ Sennett 1994: 191-193

casino or a gambling house'.⁹² Vidler refers to a 'long and poetic tradition' in which such architecture challenges not only the rules of construction but also those rules by which a society should live: mobile structures are associated with the unfixed, roving subject.⁹³ I would argue that this association between the form of the barrio and 'unstable' social behaviour provides the political imperative above the bridge for the bulldozing of the barrio (part of the tradition of fear of the pathogenic city to which I referred in my introduction). For those who live in the barrio, insecure architecture translates into both a fear of physical attack and the ultimate threat of losing one's home (an issue I discuss in more detail in chapter two). The roving subject represents a dystopia, one brought too close by the structures of the barrio. Once again, the extent to which the lament for streets is more than a yearning for paving, is made evident. The residents' lament is both a vision and a dream of security and a very different way of socially inhabiting spaces.

The cañada, like the callejón, is a source of social and structural anguish. The physical structure of the cañada is a source of anxiety. The countless invasions of the home as the cañada breaks its banks in the rain, the fear of falling in and the every day tense disputes as to who is responsible for the accumulated rubbish causes much bitter laughter and very real worry. Juan Alberto tells of his child who drowned, Marisol of her baby's deep facial scar from where she was dropped. Andrea's mother stumbled, fell and can no

⁹² Vidler 1992: 207, 210

⁹³ Vidler 1992: 209

longer walk. Sandy's girlfriend's father attacked him with a knife on a dark *puentecita* [little bridge].

Like the callejones, the cañadas are home to aggression: the pugnacious passing gesture, the petty argument. They are also the site of organised violence and some of the most dangerous spaces in the barrio. If the callejones are places to hide illicit activity, the cañadas by contrast provide useful vantage points. The improvised and slightly raised puentecitas are controlled and patrolled by the tigueres who can sight the invasions of the DEA (Drug Enforcement Authority) and the movements of opposing gangs. Crossing the bridges residents must avert their gaze, walk defensively and block out the soundbites on the *machetazo*, the most recent hatchet job. These are the tactics of dissimulation; '*...el disimulo más grande de aquí..*', 'this is the most important dissimulation here', Margot tells me, indicating a crack trading post on the banks of a cañada opposite her house.

Fears are intensified by the mobile characteristics of people and places. The tigueres vanish when they do sight danger. My own photographs mysteriously always show empty spaces. The 'hot hair cuts' dressed with the latest requisite trainers, their long knives visible under string vests, are a visual silence. Their invisibility is analogous to the way in which violence is only ever spoken of obliquely.⁹⁴ Like the lurking problem; unseen, unstable and therefore threatening.

⁹⁴ The abstract way in which violence is discussed at first causes me to believe that the violence itself is mythical; that the residents of La Ciénaga are proud of their reputation in the same way that New Yorkers

The violence, like the rubbish, threatens to invade from the banks of the cañada. This is the metaphorical rubbish which washes up (not always alive) inside the doors of terrified residents. The '*corre corre*' is a way of life, the daily runs as you flee the glistening knife of the tiguere or the even more frightening automatic weapons of the DEA, snatching up the younger children, shouting for others to follow. After the event these are stories which entertain in much the same way as the cañada itself (in a place where there is little going on) exerts a reluctant fascination; horrifying but compelling. You have to run too to look at what's happening; '*todos salimos corriendo p'a ver que sucede*', 'we all run out to look at what's going on'. You also have to know where to look and how.

Within the social and structural context of the cañadas and the callejones tactics of dissimulation are necessary for physical survival and mental ease. They are also necessary because, despite the loathing felt for the cañada and the disparaging ways the callejón is talked about, these places become the de facto social spaces.

In a dense barrio the cañadas and callejones become meeting places; spaces in which to gossip as much as spaces to gossip about. Indeed, there often seems little else to do;

'..en vez de ver quien sube, quien baja, si '*...instead of watching who is coming up or*

boast of the dangers of their subway. I later come to understand that there is nothing exaggerated in the discussions of violence, rather the ways in which it is talked about represent a verbal form of hiding which mirrors the visual 'dissimulation'. The only time I was ever physically threatened in La Ciénaga - a long sharp blade held to my neck - was when I transgressed this code, talking directly about drugs in a billiard hall, a public place.

los muchachos tuvieron una marquesina, going down, if the guys had a sheltered
un video, se dejarán el bochinche del calle.' porch, a video, they would leave the
uproar of the street.' (Magaly)

Tití, Arismendy and others endlessly complain of their boredom. This makes the callejón not only a meeting place but a source of diversion. Endless hours are spent watching people come and go, calling out greetings, insults and other provocative remarks. Men play dominos, children invent their private games, women hang out their washing and chat. And yet, as I watch and often participate in these activities I become increasingly aware that what should be gentle, mundane or even celebratory activities, take the form of the more aggressive mannerisms of the street.

As social activities and the search for distraction spill into whatever space can be found outside the cramped home, the built environment within which the activities take place seems to shape their nature. The first time I see a teenage birthday celebration (where it is customary for teenagers to tip water and anything else to hand over each other), the girls are so rough with each other, I think I am witnessing a fight. The occasion is Mari's sixteenth birthday (Margot's teenage daughter). Her behaviour on the 'street', could not be in more marked contrast to a scene inside the house where Margot, ignoring the mayhem outside, explains patiently to her youngest son why he should not crease the page on the one book they own.

Communication is spiky in the communal spaces of the barrio: an insult is more often exchanged than an opinion shared, a further mirroring of the behaviour of the *tigueres* who occupy the same spaces. Gossip which starts as gentle tittle tattle quickly turns to spiteful rumour; the *chisme*. Fear of the *chisme* and rumour in general is often as acute as the fear of violence. It is a fear which limits the possibility of communication and therefore friendship.

When I asked people who were their friends, or the people they talked to, they frequently responded defensively, saying they were not '*chismosa/o*', 'gossip mongers'. Over the years, I came to see that their fears and the nature of their response was not exaggerated. Lupina's life had been ruined by the *chisme* and even my respected comadre Margot was vulnerable. For María (the witch), dealing with the rivalries and personal enmities which grow from the *chisme* is a major source of income. This particular form of 'dirt' and María's ways of cleansing are something I will come to later. What the *chisme* illustrates is how, in its most extreme form, the social life of the *cañada* and *callejón* is one which fractures friendships rather than seals neighbourly solidarities.

In an analysis of the spatial dimensions of modernity in urban Latin America, Cela has commented on the way in which built spaces acquire social significance and in turn start to shape the social behaviour of those who live amongst them.⁹⁵ Bourdieu similarly developed the analytical category of 'cultural capital' to explain and describe the ways in

which physical and social surroundings form a certain set of social practices.⁹⁶ These sociologically based analyses contribute to my Lefebvrian concern to centre the role of the built space as a variable which exerts its own effects.

In La Ciénaga an analysis of the public spaces of the barrio suggests that the surroundings shape the interactions and social relations which take place there in two ways. The *chisme* illustrates the first: it illustrates how the tensions associated with violent and difficult places are carried over into other interactions. What should be pleasurable social activities become infected by other stresses and emotions. The built space also seems to influence the social relations and interactions of those who live there in a second, inner way. Lefebvre suggested that spaces have qualities and memories imbricated within their fabric: an unconscious of their own which acts in an involuntary manner on those who move within the spaces, a different form of interaction from the learned behaviour of the *chisme* or defensive gesture.⁹⁷ I recognise the contentious nature of this argument. At the same time, I have come to feel that the relationships formed within the public spaces of the barrio are affected in some deeper way by the structural chaos and the accreted, violent happenings of the barrio. This second inter-relationship between the built space and social relations is one most clearly articulated by the children of the barrio.

⁹⁵ Cela 1992b: 11

⁹⁶ Bourdieu 1984/93: 33

⁹⁷ Lefebvre 1974/91: 36

For children the cañada is a space in which to play, a space of the imagination. The possibility of contamination, the knowledge that they are in some way prohibited places, is the source of excitement and part of the fun.⁹⁸ But for children too, what starts as a game often becomes a fight. It is as if these spaces imbued with tension taint the social activity which takes place within them. Josaira the twelve year old daughter of Alba, at home one day, fed up and complaining about the rough games of the barrio, explained to me the source of tension and the reason the games go wrong; '*nosotros tenemos que mostrar que no somos una basura como la gente de arriba lo dice...*'. 'We have to prove all the time that *we* are not rubbish, like the people above say...' The perceived threat of contamination is not only physical. The cañada appears to give rise to a deeper dis-ease: it affects the emotions and the sense of self precisely because the self cannot be easily distanced from the surroundings.

The built space affects the emotions and, through the emotions, the practice of living, friendships and forms of social interaction. This relationship is fundamental to understanding the barrio and, I will argue, has practical implications for policy makers and planners (see for example the discussion about the possibility of community in the second half of this chapter). It is not however a deterministic relationship, but one which is multi-dimensional and multi-directional.

⁹⁸ Caceres, 1992, Map #2

The effects of the built space are several and competing. In the words of one resident ‘it [the space] provokes all sorts of feelings at the same time’. Just as the callejón is at once despised for not being a street and used as if it were, so the effects of the space are varied. The effects can be negative (the defensive relationships that result from dissimulation and the reactions of despair), or positive, creative and humorous (the optimistic sense of the something else). Important, if less immediately obvious, is the way in which the effects of the built space also go beyond these immediate reactions, gestures and practices. This is the relationship to which Josaira refers: the way in which the built space (and perhaps, although not necessarily, its unconscious) leads to inner constructions of the self. I want to return briefly to the subject of the cañada to explore these inner meanings, emotional constructions and creative opportunities in more detail.

The Cañada: an emotional construction

*‘siempre habrá opiniones sobre la
cañada...uno se inventa muchísimas cosas’*

‘there will always be opinions about the
cañada...one invents so many things’

(Fautina)

*‘..divertido, penoso, gracioso, todos los
sentimientos al mismo tiempo; risa y
tristeza...’*

‘...entertaining, awful, funny, all the
feelings at the same time; laughter and
sadness...’ (Margot speaking about the
cañada)

As with the practice of ‘dissimulation’, something at once recognised and hidden from, interpretations of the cañada present a delicate movement of thought. The cañada is a touchstone in barrio stories, frequently used to illustrate experiences, ideas and feelings that go beyond the direct effects of the construction itself (the effects of violence and flooding for example that I mentioned above). These stories reveal the cañada to be not only a place where literal rubbish is thrown, but also a place to park mental anguish and emotional detritus. The neighbourhood cloaca is a knot of emotional and social tension: a marker of all that is miserable both within the barrio and one’s own life and self. The excerpt which follows expresses the textured meanings the cañada holds. The women emphasise again the way in which social relationships are caught up with the built environment, the extent to which the built space penetrates the sense of self and the ways in which this dynamic relationship also offers a space for new ideas, for (re) interpretations.

<i>‘Yo te quiero decir algo sobre la cañada. Como decían ellas la cañada es el Faro de nosotros.’</i>	‘I want to tell you something about the cañada. As they told you the cañada is our lighthouse.’
<i>‘La cañada al nivel de faro es un lugar donde, si nosotros le pusieramos asunto, la cañada nos llama a organizarnos para</i>	‘The cañada on the level of the lighthouse is a place where, if we put our minds to it, calls us to be organised, to work together

<i>trabajar juntos con el mal que tiene ella,</i>	with all the bad it has, to see in what way
<i>pa' ver la manera en que uno lo mire.</i>	we could solve it. Because if you look at it
<i>Porque viendo así, cuando la cañada trae</i>	this way, when the cañada brings water,
<i>agua, grandes flujos de agua, y de basura.</i>	great flows of water and rubbish - rubbish
<i>El problema que hace crecer la cañada es</i>	is the thing which has made the problem of
<i>la basura que tira la gente que vive a los</i>	the cañada intensify, the rubbish which the
<i>lados de la parte arriba. La gente nos</i>	people who live on either side higher up
<i>organizamos todos. No importa que no</i>	chuck in - the people should organise, all of
<i>nos estemos mirando todos los días, no</i>	us. It doesn't matter whether we look at it
<i>importa que no nos conozcamos. No</i>	every day, it doesn't matter if we don't
<i>importa que aquella persona llegó ayer y se</i>	know each other. Never mind if that
<i>mudó a la orilla de la cañada. Sino que</i>	person came yesterday and moved to the
<i>cuando la cañada viene todo el mundo está</i>	banks of the cañada because when the
<i>a una misma voz. Todo el mundo trata de</i>	cañada comes everybody is with one voice.
<i>sacar la basura de la cañada, de destapar</i>	Everybody tries to get the rubbish out of
<i>la cañada pa' que el agua no llegue a la</i>	the cañada, to unblock the cañada, so that
<i>casa. Porque ella le da visita a todos</i>	the water doesn't reach their house.
<i>entonces por ahí viendo, así la gente si lo</i>	Because she pays a visit to everyone and
<i>pensamos bien, nosotros trabajaremos</i>	so, if people looked at it that way, the
<i>para acabar con ese mal. Eso es una</i>	people who really think, we would work
<i>'parate donde nosotros pudieremos</i>	together to finish with this evil. It's a thing

trabajar.'

we could work on.' (Amparo)

'En qué sentido es como el Faro ?'

'In what way is it like the lighthouse ?' (hc)

'Porque el faro todo el mundo quiere ir a verlo, porque eso es muy lindo...está envuelto mucho dinero. Al nivel de todo el país las noticias de la cañada ha llegado, de lo malo que tiene esa cañada - lo que ella ha hecho, y lo que hace diario.'

'Because everyone wants to go and have a look at the lighthouse...it's very beautiful, there's a lot of money wrapped up in it. The news of the cañada has reached the level of the whole country, the bad that it is, what she has done, what she does daily...' (Rafaela)

'Perdón, la atracción realmente somos nosotros, los Guanduleros porque cuando realmente ella viene con su afán, nosotros somos los que salimos para ver lo que viene, que hay ahí.'

'Excuse me, [interrupting] it's really us who are the attraction, the Guanduleros⁹⁹ because really when she comes with that anxiety and speed, it's us who go out to have a look at what's coming, what's up.'
(Marisol)

⁹⁹ Most of the women talking in this group belong to the barrio organisation COPADEBA. These women identify themselves as 'Guanduleros', although they live in La Ciénaga. There is a sense of pride with which they associate themselves with a less poor part of the barrio, one where ironically, as I have noted in the introduction, the women have little knowledge of the problems of the cañada.

<i>'Para que sea atracción al país entero debe</i>	'If it's to be an attraction for the whole
<i>ser que sea, que en la comunidad nosotros</i>	country it would have to be the whole
<i>seamos los voceros de la cañada por que</i>	community who would acclaim and be the
<i>solamente así puede ser una atracción</i>	spokes persons of the cañada because
<i>porque de la única manera que el país</i>	that's the only way that it could be an
<i>puede enterarse realmente de esa manera</i>	attraction. Because the only way that the
<i>porque ellos son ciegos y sordos aunque</i>	country really will be informed about the
<i>vean y oigan. En verdad somos nosotros</i>	cañada is that one - because they are deaf
<i>los protagonistas de la cañada.'</i>	and dumb even though they see and hear.
	The truth is it is we who are the
	protagonists of the cañada.' (Amparo)

The cañada appears here in the guise of a 'monument' as the women draw multiple (and confusing) comparisons between the cañadas and the Faro, the lighthouse built to commemorate the quincenary of Columbus' invasion of the Dominican Republic. The monumental Faro (discussed in more detail in chapter three), beams a vast laser crucifix onto the night skies above the barrio: a crude and constant reminder of the monument's immense cost, and the contrasting lack of investment and construction within La Ciénaga. The comparisons convey the ways in which the residents see the cañada as the negative inverse of the clean, engineered lines of the monument. Absent investment maintains the meandering gullies choked with litter and mud.

The comparisons drawn by the residents are again not only structural, but social.

Socially, the cañadas do play a similar role to that of the Faro: both are a spectacle. The Faro makes the wider city a spectacle for tourists. In the barrio, the residents watch the cañadas for fear they might flood and because, in a barrio devoid of real monuments or recreational spaces, they provide entertainment. Beyond the barrio, the cañada (again like the Faro) is a newsworthy thing. Over the years, numerous reports and photographs in the national press have made the cañadas as infamous as the barrio residents.

The conversation twists and turns, reverting again to the problem of the cañada, now personified and attributed an identity of her own. 'She' decides what to do and who to visit, even those who pretend to ignore her. (Dissimulated pretense is no escape here.)

The use of the word '*afán*' is striking. A word without direct translation it anthropomorphises the cañada, conveying a human sense of anxiety, worry and speed. I suggest that the cañada is personified in part because of the defining role 'she' plays each day in the life of the residents, but also, because the residents are somehow unable to distance their own sense of self from all that the cañada symbolises. It is a small step from being an attraction because of the cañada to being identified and identifying as part of the structure itself. Stressed infrastructures equate too closely with stressed

possibility of the spaces; to 'compose' new stories.¹⁰⁰ City dwellers deploy tactics which at once incorporate the pragmatic fact of the space and an imagination as to what the space might be like, the alternative ways it might be used. These are tactics which cannot be seen by those above the bridge (and thus cannot be controlled, or determined). de Certeau uses examples of the way people walk and gesture to illustrate his argument.¹⁰¹ I would argue that the way Amparo and her companions talk about the cañada illustrates a similar process. The cañada imagined as a spectacle and a person that invades the home becomes something quite different. Within these ways of talking accepted interpretations are disrupted and the creative possibility exists to make the cañada into something quite different again.

From Amparo's perspective, the difficulties which the cañadas present should provide a creative impulse to organise. Their presence is a reminder of the possibility of changing the spaces of the barrio through changing their own roles within the barrio. The women could speak up, abandon the masque of dissimulation and become the leading players in a new project. Yet, while Amparo is explicitly aware that the media exposure associated with the cañada's qualities as a spectacle, could be used differently, she is also aware of the difficulties that are faced in trying to make their alternative imaginings visible.

¹⁰⁰ de Certeau 1974/84: xiii-xiv

The cañada is a spectacle which makes the residents of La Ciénaga visible but, crucially, in such a way that they are at once denigrated. The residents by being associated with the city's cloacae become almost dehumanised. Below the bridge, they are visible, but socially excluded. It is important to emphasise that this is not a passive interpretation of the barrio's status. Amparo's ravelled words express a sophisticated understanding of marginality and the ways in which this marginality might be overcome through organisation. To be marginal is not to be completely excluded or invisible. On the contrary, the identity of the wider city and those above the bridge depends on rendering visible those who live below and drawing comparisons. As feminist scholars such as Judith Butler remind us, it is precisely by incorporating those who might be 'outsiders' and placing them within an ordered hierarchy, that marginality is constructed and the 'below' is kept in place.¹⁰² Spivak makes a very similar argument in the post colonial context, in order to explain the way in which the post colonial subject was created and made visible in order to be controlled, a process central to the cultural self representation of those who are dominant.¹⁰³

These conversations about the cañada, the slide showings and the numerous other stories told about the built space of the barrio reveal both the ingenuity and the imagination of barrio residents and the shame the place invokes; the physical and emotional strategies

¹⁰¹ de Certeau 1974/84: 41, 93

¹⁰² Butler 1990: 77

¹⁰³ Spivak quoted in Young 1990:159,174

that are deployed in order not to gaze on or think about the space. Both the sense of shame and the vagabond structures of the barrio give rise to certain forms of social interaction: illicit, aggressive, often violent. Friendship and social bonding is difficult in these spaces, in part because of the other violent activities, in part because the defensive strategies of dissimulation do not lead to open communication and, perhaps because the spaces themselves are more deeply imbricated with anxiety and aggression, emotions that affect the inner selves of the residents.

There is a need to change the space and yet, (despite the very real possibilities of invention), the emotions and actions the space gives rise to make changing the space difficult. This is the conundrum I turn to in the second part of this chapter as I look at the possibilities of community and the history and practice of social organisation within La Ciénaga.

THE COMMUNITY

‘There are only two ways to avoid suffering in this Hell. The first way out is easy for most people: Let Hell be, live it up and stop noticing it. The second way is risky. It demands constant attentive curiosity to find out who and what in the midst of this Hell is not part of it, so as to make it last by giving space to it.’

Marco Polo describes the cities he has traveled through,
Italo Calvino¹⁰⁴

Paradoxically then it is the place which is at once the potential motive for cohesion and the source of that which makes concerted action so difficult; the need to dissimulate. To organise and work together as a neighbourhood implies abandoning the pretense which makes the barrio habitable in its current form. It might be possible: the pretense is consciously recognised as such, a means of hiding from a reality which is all too evident. Yet it is a dangerous leap to exchange that which keeps you from madness, for a promise which might not materialise.

Notwithstanding the dangers, perhaps sometimes because of them, the possibilities of community are idealised and much discussed in La Ciénaga. Within the barrio the words

¹⁰⁴ Calvino quoted in Illich 1986: 22

'comunidad' and *'organización'* are used interchangeably to describe a group or organisation that is attached in some way to the place. However, when I ask residents directly what they mean by the term *'comunidad'*, what comes over most strongly is the way in which 'community' functions as an emotive idea, frequently attached to religious ideals of sister or brotherhood.

In La Ciénaga there is a longing for the *'comunidad sana'*; a barrio which is mentally and physically healthy, as well as clean. The community represents dreams of tranquillity, cleanliness, communication and understanding. As residents talk, there is an exaggerated romanticisation in their words which seems to be the diametric and closely linked opposite to the ways in which the existing surroundings are denigrated. Constantly fascinated by these extremes between what is lived and what is dreamed I asked Margot one day whether she really believed the utopian community she described could ever be a reality. 'Yes' she replied, 'if the police monitored every corner'. I fell silent. Where the police post is currently located is acknowledged by all to be the most dangerous and violent place in the barrio. An indefatigable organiser, constantly engaged in battles to release those who have been wrongfully imprisoned, Margot knows from her own experience both that there will never be police on every corner and that such a presence would be more likely to increase the violence. How could she believe that the police presence would make the 'community' she dreams of a reality ?

A dream at once cherished and deemed to be inoperable, the notion of the community appears to strike at the heart of the contradictions and difficulties that are the quotidian stuff of living in La Ciénaga. What is brought into focus is the acute suffering caused by the built environment, the consequent need to act, and the simultaneous way in which the environment plays with the individual's aspirations and affects social relations, thus limiting the possibility of bonding together. In the stories which unfold, what is also uncovered is the way in which the ideals themselves can become something to hide behind. If the community is a fantasy, then to dream of it is a further form of dissimulation; there is no need to speak out or to act.

Those who live within the barrio are not the only ones to emphasise the community. For the policy makers above the bridge the concept of community development increasingly underpins all interventions in 'problem' areas of the city. From their perspective the generic problems of the inner city: a lack of social cohesion and responsibility, dilapidated housing and infrastructure: are precisely those problems that the 'community' as a policy tool is designed to address. The 'community', as a tool central to urban social policy, with historical roots in the nineteenth century, exemplifies an approach and a way of thinking which I have argued predominates beyond La Ciénaga and Santo Domingo. As such, it provides an opportunity to look more closely both at its particular efficacy within the barrio and at its more abstract potential to address the lurking problems of the inner city.

In this chapter I will look at the negotiations that ensue over the meanings and possibility of the community, within this shared emphasis above and below the bridge. It is an enquiry that forms part of my interest in the way in which the public spaces of the barrio affect social behaviour. At the risk of confusion, in what follows, I allow the definitions of community to overlap and fuse. Elements of the utopian dream and concrete practices of organisation are included. To define the term too closely appears to impose boundaries of meaning which occlude much of what is important to those who use the idea of the 'community' within La Ciénaga. Indeed, I will go on to argue that it is precisely the way those above the bridge attempt to limit the definition of community and, within their definitions, to impose ideas of what is an authentic community or organisation, which makes the concept problematic, (an attempt which is paradoxical given that the community carries idealised notions of social organisation above the bridge).

A Brief History of Community Organisation

The story of community organisation in La Ciénaga and other barrios of Santo Domingo is one which is closely interwoven with wider political events in the Dominican Republic. It is a story of violent confrontations between the state (that is the policy makers and powers above the bridge, including the central government, the Ayuntamiento and development agencies such as the World Bank), and the barrio. The latter has both hidden

and produced some of the most radical forces across the centuries, from the early struggles of the cimarrones to the strikes and protests of recent decades.¹⁰⁵

La Ciénaga is a barrio with a particularly interesting and long history of community organisation yet, during the first years in which I stayed in the barrio, this history was largely either unremembered or unspoken. Again, this might be seen as a form of denial, linked to the barrio's built spaces. Frank Moya Pons, a Dominican historian, has found that it is only as the built space of a barrio is upgraded, that its history is remembered by its residents and becomes important. His evidence comes from another barrio in the city, Los Manguitos, where, once the built environment had been improved, the residents began to talk of the barrio's past.¹⁰⁶ As I discuss in chapter five, I observed a similar process taking place in La Ciénaga when the government began to provide infrastructure. Histories, previously denied or dissimulated, became of interest to the residents: they began to talk spontaneously about both earlier events within the barrio and the barrio's place in the city's history.

In 1965, the bridges which span La Ciénaga formed the frontline in the April Revolution, the virtual civil war between the troops supporting the left wing, democratically elected government of President Bosch and the US supported forces of the aspiring President Balaguer. Balaguer emerged victorious and, in the decades that followed, La Ciénaga, like

¹⁰⁵ I have drawn in this section from Cela's Phd thesis (untitled/undated). Chapter 4 of this thesis has a detailed history of community organisation in five different barrios of the city.

many of the city barrios suffered from systematic invasions and persecutions. Balaguer dedicated the first twelve years of his presidency, the infamous *doce años* (1966-71), to rooting out all alleged left wing supporters, with repercussions for the possibilities and process of community organisation.

From the mid 1960s to the early 1970s the *clubes* [clubs] typified the barrio community organisation. The clubs were initially formed spontaneously, without help from outsiders, in La Ciénaga, as in other barrios, to organise sports. Increasingly however their focus turned to culture and politics, a shift motivated in part by the increasing presence of leaders from outside the barrio, usually university students. Initially the state's response was one of organised and violent destruction. During the twelve year reign of terror Balaguer's paramilitary death squad, *La Banda Colora'o*, assassinated or disappeared the student leaders and attacked the clubs' members. Rauber, in her history of COPADEBA (one of the largest barrio organisations), states that three thousand young people were killed in the first year alone.¹⁰⁷ In 1970 Amnesty International reported that a murder victim could still be found every thirty four hours in the streets of Santo Domingo.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ pers.com. 1997

¹⁰⁷ Rauber 1995: 30

¹⁰⁸ Cited in Ferguson 1992: 29

In 1974 *La Banda* was disbanded and the state changed their tactics. Community organisations were no longer to be destroyed but created as a tool for control. *La Cruzada de Amor* [the Crusade of Love] was the first of such organisations started by the government and exported to the barrios. Other clubs and organisations such as the primary school network, the *Asociación de Padres y Amigos* [Association of Parents and Friends] were allegedly infiltrated and coopted. For many the seeds of deep distrust were sown.

By the 1980s direct political intervention from above the bridge was limited to election campaigns. The interventions of community organisations too were increasingly focused outside the barrio, taking the form of city wide mass protest movements. Demonstrations and strikes were organised in response to economic decline and the inadequate provision of public services. In 1980 (the start of the decade of crisis) massive riots opposed gasoline price increases and in 1984 hundreds died in protests against the signing of an agreement with the IMF.¹⁰⁹

The high body count in the so called *barrios calientes* [hot barrios], seemed to many to be the only tangible result of these protest movements of the 1980s. Thus, the commitment to broad based barrio protest withered, reflecting widespread cynicism with the political process in general. In the general election of 1990 voter abstention levels of forty five

percent were registered.¹¹⁰ Balaguer retained the presidency, despite national and international allegations of corruption, and a *duelo cívico*, a period of 'national mourning', was announced by the opposition parties.¹¹¹

Continuing to turn their back on national level politics, barrio organisations changed their form and focus during the 1990s. From the start of the decade there was an increasing emphasis on territorial organisation which has been variously interpreted by Dominican scholars. Espinal has suggested that an increasing political realism (bordering on cynicism), the declining relevance of class based protest (linked to the decade of crisis and the border wars to which I referred in my introduction) and the methods and mediation of the Catholic church all served to foster an interest in the locality.¹¹² Rauber by contrast suggests another reason for the emphasis on local territory, arguing that the state's continued, albeit less intense, efforts to infiltrate barrio organisations led to the need to organise in smaller units.

Rauber argues that the shifts in the form of barrio organisation were particularly marked following the government's attempts to enforce their plans for the *desalojo* by convincing

¹⁰⁹ Espinal 1995: 71-73. Espinal's rendition of events contrasts sharply with that of the IMF who, suppressing history, report only the 'satisfactory results as inflation declined, the external current account deficit narrowed, and the growth of real GDP resumed'. IMF Survey, 25.011.993

¹¹⁰ Ferguson 1992: 22

¹¹¹ From 1962 to the current day there have been nine general elections, making the Dominican Republic in theory a stable democracy. Results are however widely perceived to have been manipulated in all elections. Espinal's political analysis emphasises the 'mobile' nature of definitions of democracy within the Dominican context (Espinal 1995: 63).

¹¹² Espinal 1995: 83-84

small groups within a number of barrios (including La Ciénaga) of the merit of the plan. In other words, the state's political interest in reclaiming particular areas of land in the city and their localised methods of persuasion forced changes in the structure of COPADEBA. The organisation had at once to meet the challenge of a more localised debate, and, at the same time, had to change its methods of community organisation. There was an increasing reliance on popular education since the smaller organisational units could not rely on the presence of a COPADEBA leader.¹¹³

In La Ciénaga 'territorial' organisation took on a new urgency in 1991 with the publication of the decree which ordered the bulldozing of the barrio. Ironically, as COPADEBA leaders recognise, the initial psychological and economic effects of the decree 'broke the quotidian patterns' and motivated people to organise. Membership of the organisation grew during the late 1980s and early 1990s as COPADEBA, liaising closely with the Jesuit parish priests and Ciudad Alternativa (a city wide non governmental organisation with international funding), worked with many of the barrio residents both to protect La Ciénaga from the bulldozers and to try and improve the built space; '*aportando al espacio*', literally 'contributing to the space'. In recent years membership has once again declined: the bulldozing has no longer been perceived as the same immediate threat and people have started to concentrate again on their 'personal precarity'. Indeed, in a curious twist I discuss in more detail in chapter five, some residents have eventually come to long for the *desalojo*.

¹¹³ Rauber 1995: 40-42

Looking at the history of community organisation within La Ciénaga and other barrios, it becomes evident that it is not only the events and actions of the barrio organisations which are closely intertwined with those of the state. There is a close inter-relationship between the *form* of intervention and organisation above the bridge and the form of community organisation that becomes dominant below. I am not suggesting that organisation in the barrio is always reactive to the state (I will go on to look in more detail at how meanings are taken up and transformed in the local environment). I am however suggesting that, for those who live below the bridge, the ‘community’ *is* always shaped within a subjective experience of being outside a hierarchical and often violent state. The relationship between the models and interventions of the state and the practices of community below the bridge is one which should therefore be more closely examined.

This connection between the barrio and the state can be most clearly seen through tracing the historical development of communities of violence in La Ciénaga. Those involved in violent activities within the barrio are arguably those who are most organised. During the era of *La Banda* for example organisation within the barrio took the form of violent quasi military gangs. Barrio residents were terrified by local groups such as *Los Acaba Rápido* [The Rapid Terminators] and *Los Saca Hígados* [The Rip Out Your Livers]. These groups, originally political in formation, then turned their attention to economic gains and organised crime in the 1980s: a response to the wider political and economic changes I have referred to above. In the case of *Los Acaba Rápido*, two of seven original brothers

have survived, and used their profits to provide infrastructure; in the form of good will assistance inside the barrio and as private entrepreneurs outside.¹¹⁴

In recent years violence has centered on the loose affiliations of individuals who run the drugs trade and increasingly arm themselves in ways which mirror, but also can combat the strategies of the U.S. funded and trained Drug Enforcement Authority troops, known colloquially as the DEA. Indeed, many of the tactics of those individuals who run the drug trade in the barrio were learnt within the cities of the U.S. The policy of returning convicted criminals of Dominican origin, from the United States to the Dominican Republic, strikes terror in the hearts of barrio residents who claim that the '*crimines importados*' [imported crimes] have irremediably changed the nature of the organisation of violence and barrio 'society' more generally.

It is clear that the history of community organisation can only be understood in relation to the barrio's engagement with the wider city and its politics. The stakes and the structures of barrio organisations have been bound up with and shifted in relation to those of the state. Before considering how these stakes and structures are changed within the barrio through the practice of organising, I want to look a little more closely at how the models are formed above the bridge.

¹¹⁴ The exaggerated exploits of Los Acaba Rápido form part of the folklore within the barrio. Arismendy tells me that of 24 brothers only 13 are left. Javier reverses the story completely, telling me they have always been infrastructure providers and that the stories of them as a 'band' are mythical. In my numerous attempts to meet the two brothers that I know of, I never get further than Ana, the alcoholic, handsome, but

The Community: a nineteenth century tool exported from above the bridge

That the idea of 'community' continues to have power below the bridge (despite its troubled and often brutal history) is in part a reflection of the weight and importance of the idea above the bridge. Above the bridge the concept of community is a corner stone of urban policy: a unit of analysis, a form of response (the community project): a tool which carries a social vision of how people ought to live.

The community is part of the nineteenth century legacy of policy approaches and tools to which I referred in my introduction. Looking at the history of urban poverty in the nineteenth century, Procacci has documented the ways in which community organisation was conceived as a way of at once helping those seen as the 'deserving poor' and eliminating the social danger of the 'mobile mob'. In the words of Antoine Buret (1840); 'This floating population of the great cities...that dangerous enemy of our civilisation.' Within this analysis, the importance of the state closely defining 'community' becomes evident; the objective is to control spontaneous solidarities and mobility.¹¹⁵

dishevelled wife of the eldest brother. When I first go to the house I ask if she is his wife. 'Supposedly' she replies; on this particular occasion it is months since she has seen him either.

¹¹⁵ Procacci 1991: 160-164

The continued and recently increased emphasis on the community has been noted in recent surveys on urban social policy in theory and practice.¹¹⁶ To group together the policy makers and powers above the bridge and to indicate the historical roots and origins of their tools is not to suggest that their positions are monolithic or unchanging. It does however make possible an analysis of the view points and positions of power which are shared in common with respect to those below the bridge and to ask the Foucauldian question as to whose interests are served by the current approaches.

Accepting then that a range of attitudes and approaches are included within a shared language, I believe that two broad (apparently distinct) models of ‘community’ can be delineated. These are the models that residents and those above the bridge (the city government, the church, the police) borrow from, adapt and pervert.

The first model I will call the ‘Oxfam’ model.¹¹⁷ This model, preferred by non governmental institutions, can be characterised as a model of the participating subject. The declared aim is one of devolving power and decision making to the locality. Oxfam guidelines state that participation must be on people’s ‘own terms’ and emphasise that much of what currently passes for community participation does not empower the most

¹¹⁶ See for example the surveys of urban policy by Hill (1994), and Blackman (1995)

¹¹⁷ I use the example of Oxfam since the organisation is one of the few to have analysed their approach and set down careful guidelines (Eade and Williams, 1995). I do not intend my own analysis to be read as a particular critique of Oxfam as an organisation.

disadvantaged in society.¹¹⁸ The difficulty with the model is that, despite acknowledging possible conflicts of interest, there is little guidance as to how well meant rhetoric might be used in practice. (Indeed, Oxfam acknowledge that there is ‘a crisis in development practice’.)¹¹⁹ The Oxfam model remains a standardised, blue print declaration of intent and, whilst the model is defined to confront poverty, scant consideration is given to the possibility that these very socio economic conditions might make participation impossible.

The second model, which I will call the ‘World Bank’ model (that of central government or the multi/ bilateral institution) is rooted in some understanding that socio economic conditions are limiting the success of wider policies and programmes. That is, the role of the economy is acknowledged and community based initiatives are designed either to mitigate its worst effects or to further prop up the implementation of core policies such as those of structural adjustment. A more substantive tension between the aims of macro economic policy and the limited resources often found at community level is not acknowledged.

The World Bank’s renewed emphasis since the 1980s on community development and participation, ‘letting ordinary people take control of their lives’, might thus be cynically read as the fear that those left outside the development process are a threat to the wider

¹¹⁸ Eade and Williams 1995: 14-15

project, with obvious parallels to the nineteenth century fear of the mob.¹²⁰ A more humanitarian reading would posit a genuine concern that programmes which are aimed at the barrio are not reaching their target (sic). The World Bank model is about objects rather than subjects although increasingly (as the 'World Bank' borrows from the social expertise of 'Oxfam', while the 'Oxfam' model in turn adapts to get its share of multi and bi lateral funding), the edges are blurring.

What is increasingly striking about these approaches to community development is not their differences, but their commonalities. In these renderings the 'community' is a blunt tool designed for 'other' people and 'other' places; those seen as the detritus of the city. As such the concept cannot differentiate or 'see', the movements within the barrio; the range of opinions, the lessons, scars and attitudes formed by a particular history which the stories told within the barrio reveal. I will argue that this failure to concentrate on the nature of the internal relations of the place and people, and the burden of the positive standards implied, not only makes participation more difficult, it makes it harder for those 'targeted' to re-imagine their own solutions in the ways earlier hinted at by Amparo and her companions. They are imprisoned within a discourse which cannot 'see' crucial inter-relationships within their world.

¹¹⁹ Eade and Williams 1995: 819

¹²⁰ See in particular the World Bank's own description of this process in their 1990 *World Development Report on Poverty* and in the 1993 *World Bank Handbook on Poverty*.

Commenting on the difficulties of the ideal of community from a feminist perspective, Iris Young has criticised the totalising tendencies of both the discourse and the practice which surround community initiatives. She has also emphasised the way in which dwelling at ease in the city means having a sense of the beyond: a model of the community which attempts to control is, she posits, ultimately self defeating.¹²¹ Her critique resonates with my wider concerns and sits within the body of feminist writing I referred to in my introduction. It is implicit in Young's analysis that neither the emotions nor the multiple factors which determine participation and attitudes towards the community can be included within the tightly defined ideals of community; 'The dream is understandable, but politically problematic, ...those motivated by it will tend to suppress differences among themselves or implicitly to exclude from their political groups persons with whom they do not identify.'¹²² I have already illustrated both the range of opinions and differences that exist within the barrio, and how complex emotional responses are important in determining actions. I hypothesise that these factors, if excluded from the practice of community organisation, will influence the process in unexpected ways: a further factor that explains the persistence of common problems.

To reiterate, the barriers to the formation of community organisation are internal (the fractured friendships that result from rumour, the need to dissimulate) and external (the state tactics which range from aggressive destruction to the more benign, but equally

¹²¹ Young 1986: 305

unhelpful, introduction of unsuitable ideas). Despite these barriers the idea of 'community' remains important, both above the bridge even though it does not bring the desired results and below the bridge, despite the fact the ideal represented seems a distant possibility. Over the years I have been repeatedly told by barrio residents that 'happiness' would be to live as a 'community'.

What then are the ways this abstract concept, whose premise seems so much at odds with the barrio reality, is taken up and transformed in a local context. And why? I am interested in the diverse and mobile strategies of those within the barrio; how they engage with the idea and in the process re-work the concept. What is revealed; the successes, the obstacles and the process, tell us much both about what it means to live in La Ciénaga and the difficulties with current policy approaches.

Community Organisation: the practice

In La Ciénaga the absence of space makes any sort of community organisation difficult. I realise this one Sunday, when I attend a local COPADEBA meeting organised to discuss cleaning the rubbish out of two of the smaller cañadas. The minutes taken and the notes I make in my own notebook at the time give the impression of a model community meeting: America's skilled facilitation, a democratic airing of views, a decision of future action and

¹²² Young 1986: 300

the sharing out of responsibilities; who will work in the cañada who will make yet another representation to the Ayuntamiento to ask them to send rubbish services. But what is written, and much of what is spoken, hides what takes place; I, like everyone there, am 'dissimulating'. It is much later I think about this meeting and see in my mind what really happened.

It is a challenge to find a place to meet. We squash together outside in a small space, squatting on crates, the odd rickety chair and bench. Others stand round the circle. In a further concentric ring we are patrolled by the *tigueres*, their weapons visible. At the centre the children's games, constantly interrupted by the adults' reprimands when they get too noisy, mirror the tactics of the *tigueres*. The boys shove sticks down their shorts in preparation for mock shoot outs with their seven year old friends. It takes a long time for everyone to come; over an hour passes and just as the 'business' begins, Chulo, arms waving wildly, starts a crazed discourse from the roof of a nearby house. Disruption ensues: his *agache* [trick] irritates a few and makes others laugh. The late start, Chulo's guerrilla tactics and the drawn out formalities of the meeting mean that most have drifted away with boredom before the end. Who has and who has not attended later becomes a matter for dispute. Agreements reached are gradually forgotten.

Chulo tells me that the *agache* is the only way to deal with the tension of such meetings. It is a tension that, as an outsider, I haven't noticed and, since I didn't know Chulo at the time, it was his intervention which initially caused me to feel tense. I dreaded that some

confrontation between the men at the COPADEBA meeting and the tigueres was about to take place. Like so many other apparently negligible incidents, Chulo's performance is intensely revealing of the small, but radical differences, in the way the barrio appears to outsiders to be lived and the way it is understood by its residents.

The *agache*, a trick, is literally translated as hiding or not being seen. Within the barrio, humour is a defence mechanism, a further form of dissimulation through which the barrio can be lived. Writing in the Dominican context, the anthropologist and activist Jesuit priest, Jorge Cela, has described the *agache* as a gesture; a form of social interaction born of the barrio and, in particular, of the relation between the authoritarian strategies of the government and a culture of violence. Cela suggests that the joke or trick becomes a strategy for survival. The worse the sense of oppression, the greater the need for humour and a sense of the carnivalesque; 'humour gives a sense of proportion to the execution of violence, the negation of identity'.¹²³

Interestingly, in a quite different context (that of Algeria), Bourdieu makes a very similar observation; 'against exploitation and injustice the only weapons to hand are flight, cunning and trickery..., anything will serve that will cut out moments that remind of the incoherence and futility of a life constrained by lack of employment etc.'. ¹²⁴ Maria, the witch, is the one who uses cunning and trickery to greatest effect, a process I look at in

¹²³ 'el humor relativiza la violencia ejercida, la negación de la identidad' (Cela 1989: 10-11 my translation).

more detail in chapter four. What I want to emphasise here is not the role of the *agache* per se (although it serves to underline the importance of understanding the practice of dissimulation in the barrio), but rather the way in which a community meeting, apparently following a formula found the world over, when looked at more carefully, hides a very particular way of living.

Within the barrio, the lack of space and the tensions associated with the space (on this particular occasion the *agache*, on others the way that rumours develop into social rifts and divisions) make the practice of community formation and organisation difficult.

Lefebvre has argued that it is inappropriate spatial morphologies which account for the failure of alternative communities.¹²⁵ While his argument might sound esoteric, it is a pertinent reminder of the importance of considering the impact of the built environment on the activities which take place there. This is the argument I put forward in my introduction; the importance of seeing the city as more than the setting or the goal which is fought over (Castells' argument) but rather as a variable or 'thing' which exerts an independent force on city dwellers and events.

It is a much repeated view in La Ciénaga (despite the idealisation of the 'community'), that organisation is impossible. La Ciénaga, I am constantly told, is not like 'other places' where people agree to help each other;

¹²⁴ Bourdieu 1979: 67

'Cada quien tiene su grupo, como pequeñas religiones. El chisme es lo que más se usa en el barrio.' 'Everyone has their own group, they're like little religions. Rumor and gossip are what is most common in the barrio'. (Sandra)

The practices of dissimulation combined with the search for the safety of your own small corner, the *pedazito*, gives rise to a form of association and communication based on the secretive rumour. The *grupitos* [little groups] which form around the secret are described as a way of life: one which makes any form of community based on a wider association or interest impossible.

At its most benign the grupito is a grumbling form of solidarity, a genuine 'defensive banding together' in adversity.¹²⁶ It is often based on a loss of faith in existing organisations; the complaint that so many meetings are held and so little is achieved. At its most nefarious the secret becomes the malicious *chisme*, which can have the devastating consequences alluded to above. Mostly, the grupito results in feelings of isolation, even for those who are apparent 'insiders'; 'here everyone carries their problems alone' I am told on numerous occasions over the years. Secret rumours lead to a sense of exclusion which is often a cause of tension not only between individuals, but between organisations. The feeling that there are 'insiders' and 'outsiders' is one of the reasons that there are divisions between the two larger religious groups, the Catholic and Evangelical churches.

¹²⁵ Lefebvre, 1974: 380 (see introduction)

People are 'egotistical', awkward and difficult. Cooperation is erratic; '*hoy defiende (sic), mañana huye*', 'today they defend, tomorrow they flee', Chulo's brother Arismendy explains. When I ask him why he doesn't go to the COPADEBA meetings he retorts '*yo no voy a ser sujeto a nadie*', 'I'm not going to be subject to anyone'. This is a common point of view. It is the same tack that is taken when I ask people why they are not members of the Catholic church. The first response always refers to the confession; 'I'm not going to confess to another person'. These are responses that I interpret primarily as an attempt in a hierarchical society to hold one's own in whatever ways are left open.

Despite his defiant words, cynical attitude to ideas of the community and bored frustration with the barrio in general, Arismendy is one of those I frequently find clearing out the cañadas. By way of explanation he draws parallels with Chico Mendez (the Brazilian activist) who worked not for himself, since he knew things could never change in his life time, but for the future; 'he who doesn't build drowns' Arismendy comically declaimed, knee deep in the filth of the cañada, before launching into a series of riddles with which he loves to entertain.

Arismendy's defensive jests and the way in which his actions differ from his words is a form of behaviour shared by many in the barrio. The disjunction between words and actions is revealing of the tensions and difficulties experienced by those who do try to

organise. Community for Arismendy and many others represents a form of dystopia; it carries both a legacy of the authoritarian past and memories of control which are equally part of the present. There is the boredom of interminable meetings, the way in which politics always takes over; '*eso es que trae lío*', 'that's what brings chaos'.¹²⁷ There is also something deeper; the painful knowledge that community organisations and projects are for those who are marginal within the city. This is the subjective experience of the community I referred to above: within the barrio, the imperative to organise or the knowledge that you have a 'community' project, is a reminder of your poverty, your status below the bridge.¹²⁸ To participate is simultaneously to abandon your dreams of escape.

An important parallel can be drawn here with the wider discourse of development and planning which, as Escobar has noted in the context of the Third World, not only maps social landscapes, but transforms cultures; 'It has done so through the systematic elaboration of fields of knowledge and institutions which made possible the establishment in the Third World of forms of power through which individual, government officials, and, sometimes, *whole communities* [my italics] recognized themselves as

¹²⁷ Another of the parish priests tells me this is the most common response to any attempt to talk about wider political or social issues in the youth group he runs. The barrio teenagers shy away from these issues which they associate with problems and inter personal strife.

¹²⁸ Unusually this is something that Ciudad Alternativa are aware of; Andres Navarro argues that NGOs lower your esteem; if you lived in a decent part of the city they wouldn't be there thus to be involved is to constantly be reminded of your poverty, a sense of low self value. His argument has obvious parallels with those of Escobar I delineated above.

underdeveloped...' ¹²⁹ Community organisation can be seen in this context as a further tool to keep the 'below' in place. Arismendy's determination not to be a subject is born from a sense of pride. His apparently contradictory behaviour can be interpreted as a creative but ceaseless task of evading not just the community, but hierarchical frameworks more generally.

It is increasingly clear that the idea of community contains both the retrospective and the prospective; both the legacy of past failures and the potential promise of an improved future. History, place and the personal are so closely interwoven. These are the archaeologies of self. You form opinions and decide whether to take action based on memory and emotions; what were things like before, what they ought to be like. This mixture of imaginings and past actions provides the perspective, the way of looking with which you meet the future. There is the past that it is so hard for the outsider to see, the emotions that are not on the policy maker's map; things I can only glimpse in my time below the bridge and never really understand.

Whether any form of organisation or community currently exists in La Ciénaga is perspectival. Some see the barrio as highly organised, others as anarchic. Organisations which do currently operate at the barrio level include: COPADEBA, Ciudad Alternativa, various Juntas de Vecinos [neighbourhood committees] and the Catholic church with its wide range of committees which range from clubs for adolescents to administration of the

¹²⁹ Escobar 1992: 413.

market on the Avenida San Francisco Rosario Sanchez. While the Juntas de Vecinos are to some extent separate, more overtly political organisations linked to the central political parties, there is in general a wide degree of overlap between members and leaders of the other organisations. Within the barrio church-goers and committee organisers are the key activists within COPADEBA. Amongst the organisers, Andres Navarro second in charge at Ciudad Alternativa is the brother of Jose Navarro one of the three Jesuit priests, coordinator of the youth groups. Those outside this inner circle watch organisations come and go with a detached attitude. Few mourn the frequent demise of previously successful organisations, perhaps because, like Arismendy, they know the personal cost of involvement is too high.

These attitudes towards the community change between spatial pockets. So often in La Ciénaga, to cross from one cañada to another is to cross worlds. This is one reason why people talk within the barrio in metaphors of great distance. At the cañada Bonavide, the central sewer which divides La Ciénaga de los Guandules from La Ciénaga de Guachupita there is a community project in progress; the bridge and the walls of the deep gully are being reinforced, the choking litter removed. Freddy the president of the *Junta de Vecinos de Caridad* [Neighbourhood Committee of Charity] is in charge of coordinating the project. As we talk about the project's progress and the difficulties of organising to change this place, it becomes evident that Freddy's success is due to the way he takes on board precisely those things that Arismendy and others complain about.

For Freddy, the community and the barrio project are under assault, often literally, from the *chisme*. Suspicions derived from rumour are constant; charges of corruption (the possibility for example that the Ayuntamiento might be paying him backhanders) limits the possibility of local trust on which a community organisation might be built. Freddy invokes images of dirt to describe a society that is damaged by distrust.

<i>'nuestra sociedad está dañada totalmente y</i>	'our society is totally damaged and people
<i>la gente siempre tiene mucho</i>	are always so distrustful...it's not a society
<i>desconfianza...no es sociedad si no</i>	it is a dirtiness [untranslatable pun on
<i>suciedad.'</i>	words]' ¹³⁰ (Freddy)

Freddy knows that repairing the bridge involves repairing both these damaged relationships and the damaged structure within the barrio. He believes his ability to address both issues is central to his success. Interestingly he describes his own methods as those of a psychologist; he must understand the '*muchachos acomplejados*', 'these guys with complexes', and persuade people to 'look outside themselves'. He talks of their fear; the fear involved in leaving the violent ways, the *chantaje* [myth/blackmail]; a way of living which is familiar and through which they hide and survive with an illusion that they will shortly be leaving the barrio. It is an illusion Freddy tells me candidly that he shares despite the little real chance of leaving; he has recently lost his life savings in a local bank when the manager disappeared. He knows that, as in his own case, there is a tense gap inside everyone, a knowledge that however much they might dream of leaving, they know it to be unlikely. It is this tension he taps, in his words 'infiltrates'. He looks for the 'little leader' the ringleader of the backgammon circle, the owner of the billiard hall

¹³⁰ Freddy sets up the community and society as polar opposites; this is common in conversations in La Ciénaga where 'society' represents an above the bridge network from which they are either excluded or placed within a social hierarchy in which they are assumed to be poor/useless. Currently 'democracy/civil society' projects in the Dominican Republic seem unaware of this below the bridge suspicion of 'society', which must be limiting the potential success of their projects.

and persuades them to join, knowing the rest will follow. As the construction progresses credibility is simultaneously built. The weeks pass and as we stand on the bridge Freddy talks about how he has constructed a sense of the possible, a concrete small hope.

The process of organisation reveals the ways in which *within* the barrio ‘community’ contains multiple meanings that change over time and are constantly in competition with each other. These are processes which cannot be understood or allowed for within the external models to which I referred above. They are however processes which are visible within the theoretical writings of the feminists on whom I have drawn. An emphasis on the continual renegotiation of internal pressures and external events and the significance of what de Lauretis refers to as a ‘bundle of determinations’¹³¹ results in a more textured understanding of an individual’s social actions and choices. These are writings which also make us alert to the ways in which the same language can be used to express very different things.

Two groups with whom I work, that of Yonesa and that of Fautina, live in close proximity to each other in La Ciénaga. Their homes are divided by one of the smaller cañadas. Their world views seem much further apart (and cannot be explained by the usual factors of age, income or working status). Both groups dream of community. In Yonesa’s group the dream is a further form of dissimulation, something to hide behind. In Fautina’s group the community is also a dream, but one of an escape that can be worked

towards and reached through tireless activity. Fautina and her friends talk of this process in terms of a revolutionary ‘struggle’; a work of huge commitment that leaves you without time to sleep or eat. This was a way of talking which mystified me at first; it seemed so far removed from any real change in the barrio.

‘...son pocos en el barrio los que voceran y encima de eso son pocos los que nos oyen...’ ‘...there are few in the barrio who raise their voices and on top of that there are few that hear us...’ (Fautina)

‘...a nosotros lo que no se nos permite tal vez hacenos oir lo que nosotros exigimos...porque nosotros desde pequeño - bueno, desde que uno creció - lo que se he encontrado es así, como maltrato, no? De las autoridades, de lo gobierno. Entonces la gente ha crecido con una mentalidad que uno cree que uno no tiene derecho, que no debe luchar y que nada, la lucha trae sacrificios y se pierde tiempo y entonces por medio de esto vivimos en una poblacion [interrupting/affirming] ‘...perhaps what doesn’t allow us to do things, or for our demands to be heard, is that since we have been small - well, since one has grown up - what we have found is like abuse of the authorities, from the government. So, people have grown up with a mentality of believing that one doesn’t have any rights, that you shouldn’t fight and well, the struggle brings sacrifice and one wastes time and so that’s why we live in a

¹³¹ de Lauretis 1990: 137 (see introduction)

<i>conformista. Nosotros somos conformista,</i>	population that's conformist. We are
<i>nos hemos adaptado; aunque si mueren</i>	conformists, we have adapted; if a hundred
<i>cient diario pero si hay arroz, habichuela y</i>	people die a day but there's rice, beans and
<i>carne se sientn que estan bien.'</i>	meat, you feel fine.' (Amparo)

Fautina's group have converted the process of organisation into the goal itself. There is pride in the process; '*somos gente*', 'we are people'; this refrain is a recognition of the way in which the process is one of identity construction and the hard won notion that the barrio residents have rights too.

Even as they celebrate and romanticise their struggle however, Fautina and her friends are aware that theirs is a position that not everyone shares. As so often in La Ciénaga arguments mutate in numerous complicated directions. Thus the vision of Fautina's group is not only different from that of Yonesa's (who believe organisation to be impossible) but also from that of Magaly. Magaly's group rejected both the revolutionary language and methods; '*nosotros no vamos a hacer una huelga, no vamos a quemar gomas...*'; 'we aren't going to strike, we aren't going to burn tyres...'. The history of the barricades has at once dissuaded the less revolutionary minded, at the same time as making organising for infrastructure provision seem rather pedestrian, a business which, however important it might be, no longer excites the imagination. The legacy of being invisible and unheard means furthermore that it is easier to 'adapt' (the strategy of Yonesa and her friends; a further form of dissimulation) than to fight. Fautina discusses

how those who organise are few, they are criticised for being too slow and they know how often they go unheard.

I am not able to account for the psychosocial infrastructure that leaves some dreaming of the community while others are able to organise. Bourdieu has argued that the poorer you are, the greater the abyss between the imaginary and experience, and the greater the incoherence in opinions. Aspirations become more realistic as the possibilities become greater.¹³² While in general poverty might explain the utopian qualities the idea of community represents in La Ciénaga, it cannot explain the difference between the two groups.

Fautina's group, who are mostly members of COPADEBA and church-goers, have been tutored by the parish priests, whose perspective of the community they share. Working closely with the Jesuit parish priests Fautina's group have also learnt to place their local struggle within a wider social and historical context. (Again, this is not a reason for the difference in behaviour between the two groups since theoretically any individual might take their suggestions or become part of the process.) The radical nature of the Jesuits' work; their daily involvement in both the practical and adversarial business of the barrio over the long term, has resulted in a sophisticated analysis of the possibilities of community within the barrio. Firstly, the priests argue, a realistic starting point is needed somewhere between that which is dreamed of and that which is deemed possible; '*ni*

imaginario ni realidad es así en la pobreza', 'neither the imaginary nor reality are as they seem in poverty'. Secondly, they see participation as an objective in and of itself.

Through a process of repetitive talking and meeting, the residents become 'protagonists of their own destiny'. Identity construction (as opposed to the (re)construction of the barrio) is thus the primary objective.

The Jesuit approach is one which most closely approximates to the Oxfam model (that of the participating subject to whom power is devolved). There are however certain critical differences. The plain clothed priests have been working in the barrio for almost twenty years. This has given them not only a textured understanding of the barrio but a different perception of time. Pointing to the '*fracaso*', the daily reality of failure and set backs with which the barrio dweller lives, the priests argue that, within such an environment, to look at organisation in a linear manner, as a cumulative process of accumulated goals, would be to 'break' the person and the organisation with them; 'to destroy the personality'. The process which they advocate is a gradual one which can incorporate setbacks and the '*capricho*', the whim and mood of residents. This is an approach which is at once historically situated (it acknowledges the bruises acquired by former failings) and expressly recognises the limitations of place: the way in which the context of the

¹³² Bourdieu 1979:50-51, 53

barrio shapes certain social characteristics; the ways of living which are necessary for survival within La Ciénaga, but which can incapacitate residents in other contexts.¹³³

Their arguments are compelling; at once realistic in their acceptance of the limitations of the social and physical barrio reality and apparently successful in terms of the potential for practical application within the barrio. The language is one that Fautina and her friends feel able to use. And yet there are very real difficulties. Despite the effort and the hours invested, meetings all too often collapse into argument. People, as the parish priest tells me, are still '*sumamente sensible*', 'extremely sensitive'. A comment taken badly can mean it is over a month until people talk again. While this fragility might arguably still change with time, the limitations of any practical achievement are also problematic. I would argue that the one thing is not disconnected from the other; while there are no concrete results within the barrio it seems unlikely that the self confidence or the sense of identity will change. I have already shown the ways in which emotions are imbricated within the structures of the cañada and the callejón. Sensibilities will remain acute while tangible changes in the built space are elusive.

An interesting comparison can be drawn between the results of Fautina's organisational approach and the infrastructure successes of those who live near Yonesa. During my

¹³³ José Nuñez SJ who works in the parish and has written a thesis on community organisation, defines organisation as '*una practica que concentra en la discusión*', 'a practice which centres on discussion'. He refers to Bourdieu and Touraine developing a synthesis in which two points are particularly pertinent. Firstly, drawing on Touraine, there is an idea of social action as a process of creating the subject. Secondly, drawing on Bourdieu, there is a central notion of rupture and its possibilities, that is, the way one practice

three year absence from La Ciénaga (1993-96), there was a change in the barrio infrastructure: many of the residents acquired a private water tap inside their homes.

When I returned to La Ciénaga, no one mentioned the provision of water; they had moved on to the next struggle. I was intrigued by the process however not least because the homes around Yonesa's house had more and better connections than those of Fautina and her friends. A history of meetings in Fautina's pedazito had not resulted in the same results despite their tireless efforts. Yonesa and her friends had organised a group payment for an illegal connection through a reticulation pipe they had installed along the length of the callejón. It seemed that, on the surface at least, this tacit adoption of a free market model in the free market economy, that is, a form of organisation which once again mirrored the tactics of those above the bridge, was the wiser strategy. The ideals pursued by Fautina's community (constant campaigning for a formal connection) seemed to have been isolating.

The reality as ever turns out to be more complex. Seven years of lobbying for water on the part of COPADEBA (of which Fautina's group are part) persuaded Santo Domingo's water authority (the CAASD) to provide a water main along the border of the barrio in 1994. The market model adopted by Yonesa and her friends was only made possible because of the groundwork done by others; their reticulation pipe draws directly from the

can eventually replace another and determine a different way of living. My interpretation of the Jesuits' approach is based on extended conversations with both Nuñez and Cela.

water main. Yet the conclusions essentially hold true. Tracing the process of this water provision further reveals the extent of the relationship between the built space and the emotions and the ways in which community organisation is tied to the wider city processes.

As I listen to the stories of these two very different experiences and watch the community process over time, it is something else altogether that I find to be increasingly striking. The process of organisation, with uncertain outcomes, becomes itself a source of uneasy emotion. If Arismendy can shrug off the impossibility of organising with a passing witticism, America's attitude is quite different. Despite her success as a COPADEBA leader in terms of the respect she commands, the articulate way she talks and the distance that she walks, the efforts to organise are themselves a source of stress; the slothfulness of neighbours, the promises to attend which are never kept; '*aquí la gente son histérica*', 'here people are hysterical' she sighs with exasperation.

Within the barrio the ideal of community is double edged; while it might represent a future hope, it often translates into a current stress where ideology fails to fit reality. In the Dominican context Paula Quiroga has defined ill health to be a result of a daily failure to integrate the dichotomies of existence as they are presented by 'culture' on the one hand and 'reality' on the other.¹³⁴ These are the dangers to which Yonesa and Alba refer, the

¹³⁴ Quiroga 1988: 149

fears which Freddy mentions. 'Community' is experienced (part of the time) as a negative emotion, a sense of tension or discomfort.

Freud in his essay on *Civilisation and its Discontents* provides an interesting line of theoretical enquiry which pertinently links ideas of anxiety to those of the community. Freud defined 'discontent' as an emotion central to understanding why the individual is frequently ill at ease, both within themselves and the community which surrounds them.¹³⁵

Just as the built space has to be dissimulated, so to be part of a community or organisation involves keeping down certain emotions.

Understanding the gap between a rational vision ('community' as it seen above the bridge) and the apparently haphazard practice and outcomes below, is a concern that, in a more generic sense underpins much psychoanalytic writing.¹³⁶ Freud posits that the behaviour society demands of the individual within a social network or community demands the sublimation of both emotions and memories; the personality he argues (using spatial metaphors) is 'flattened'. Like the persistent practical urban problems with which I am concerned, emotions inevitably re-emerge, often with startling consequences. Freud

¹³⁵ Freud 1930/91: 277

¹³⁶ I have drawn here not only on Freud 1930/91, but also on de Lauretis (who is concerned with the role of the unconscious in the resistance to identifications (1990: 126) and Rose 1996 (who writes of histories barely acknowledged, the self contradictory nature of identities and the ways in which state policies which engage with them are prone to internal collapse (1996: 59-67).

suggests they might take the form of either aggression against society, feelings of individual guilt or shame, or malaise.¹³⁷

Ironically it seems as if the concept of community doubles back on itself, exacerbating the very things it was designed to ease: feelings of shame and stress are intensified and the fractured relations persist. It is as if the vagabond architecture of the barrio (epitomised by the cañada and the callejón) have constructed a certain way of life; one of violence, insecurities of self and one where communication is impossible. Logic dictates that a community effort to change the space is needed. The idea is exported from above the bridge by priest and president alike: a project for organised salvation. The priests even talk about '*el rescate del espacio*', literally the 'redemption of space.' Below the bridge the concept is idealised and then abandoned in despair.

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To summarise, there is a vicious and negative relationship between the built space of the barrio and the emotions. The callejón and the cañada are regarded with disgust, sometimes with despair, and associated in the minds of the residents with the negative activities that take place there: the social waste of the tigueros, the physical waste of the rubbish. At times this association is so close, that the residents identify *themselves* with the spaces

¹³⁷ Freud 1930/91: 302, 329

they occupy. The anxiety this causes leads to a variety of responses, the most extreme of which is to dissimulate; to emotionally block out the barrio.

This close relationship between the built space and the feelings of those who inhabit it calls into question accepted ways of addressing the barrio and the problems it contains. The community project for example is problematic. No model is without opportunity costs for those who participate (costs in terms of pride for Arismendy and stress for America). To ignore the impact of either the built space or the emotions, and the relationship between the two, (something I have noted to be common among policy makers above the bridge), is to have your project fall apart, or to make people ill in a different way through stress. These are issues which cannot be elided (although, as I will show in chapter five, those who design projects above the bridge attempt to do so); they eventually rebound.

In trying to form the community, both the planners above the bridge and those who live below appear to have placed boundaries on their imaginations. The dream of the community is one I too have inhabited for many years. In the end it seems however that to abandon 'hope' in the idealised form which the community represents, is fundamental to moving on, to dreaming in a different way. If the issues of social and physical waste in La Ciénaga are to be resolved, a very different approach is needed.

In the short term, the barrio residents have their own means of escape: they turn away from the tensions of the cañadas, the fights in the callejones, the anxieties of neighbours and the group: they flee for home. These stories of the home are those I explore in the next chapter, asking how 'homes' can be constructed in such an unhomely place. What is the meaning of home for the residents of La Ciénaga ?

CHAPTER TWO: THE HOME

Do you believe that space can give life or take it
away, that space has power ? 'These are the
questions she asks that frighten me.'
bell hooks¹³⁸

In which I explore the meaning of home, the ways in which the flimsy construction of the private place echoes a flimsy sense of self: inside the shabby possessions and intense domestic violence turn the refuge into a prison and some residents turn ever inwards into themselves.

'No hay nada lindo en este barrio - por eso 'There is nothing beautiful in this barrio -
és que valoramos la casa' that's why we value the house' (Yonesa)

In a barrio that is 'detested', the home is seen as a refuge. To cross the threshold is an attempt to put a physical and emotional boundary between you and the horrors outside, an attempt to escape. Yet what can be the possibility of 'home' in such a place? The haven seems all too often imagined; the rain drips through the holes in the roof and the possessions inside are shabby. Amparo's ripped sofa is a constantly touched, unspoken reminder of the mess she is in. It is as if the fabric of the home affects the sense of self

and private feelings, just as the built space of the barrio affects the emotions and social bonds.

There is an ambiguity in the way in which La Ciénaga is always spoken of as an unlivable place, and yet it is at once a place where ‘home’ takes on a heightened significance as a refuge for the self, a mode of survival, a repository of dreams. In this chapter, I want to explore this ambiguity. I look at the structure of the house and what it contains. I question the meaning of home; the ways in which people turn inwards; into the house and into themselves, and consider the wider implications for the way we both see the barrio and might imagine its future.

HOUSE HUNTING

You come to live in La Ciénaga because you have to. The search for a home within the city; ‘*dónde meterse*’, ‘where to put yourself’, is a process always described by gestures of the arms, which are flung about, as if to illustrate the random way that fate has decreed this place must be home.

‘*Vivir ! es que estamos obligado a vivir...se*’ ‘We live here because we have to...you can
coge lata, un pedazo de madera y con get a bit of tin, a piece of wood and with

¹³⁸ hooks referring to her grandmother’s house in *An Aesthetic of Blackness* (1990: 103)

basura se llena pero en otros sitios cuesta rubbish you fill in the gaps but in other
mucho dinero places it costs a lot of money.'

Jaqueline describes the way a house is put together, made from a precarious patchwork of cardboard, wood offcuts and tin; in her words 'rubbish'. The disorder in the joints and the jagged edges are a daily reminder to the inhabitants of the way their lives have been patched together; that this place is not home by choice; you live in La Ciénaga because you can't afford to live elsewhere.

The process is illegal: the houses are built against the grid and against the law. The decree of eviction imposed in September 1991 banned both the construction of houses and home improvements. The marines posted to keep a twenty four hour guard at all the barrio's entrances and exits are meant to ensure that even the acquisition of a new bed is prevented. Their presence represents the state's determination that 'home' should be an impossibility in La Ciénaga; their checkpoints are a reminder that the threatened bulldozers will reduce all houses to rubble.

Residents have however continued to build. Others, from outside the city or from barrios they can no longer afford to live in, continue to hunt for houses within La Ciénaga. A complicated system of bribery and corruption has evolved. Materials can be bought at grossly inflated prices from hardware shops owned by the military. Proof of purchase and the payment of a further bribe at the entrance to the barrio ensures the marines will turn a blind eye. Some organise their constructions through these networks. Others

stealthily begin their concrete walls little by little within an existing wooden shell. Zinc and cardboard dwellings are converted secretly in the night to concrete block.

Construction is an act of defiance and successful completion means being constantly on your guard. In such a tense atmosphere, the search for a home is one riddled with anxiety. Jaqueline has heard that the marines are preparing to knock down her new but still uncompleted house. Since there is an unspoken rule that occupied dwellings will not be smashed, she and her two tiny children have moved in. 'In' however I felt was a euphemism when I visited. Her floor is a mud puddle: there has been no time to collect the rubbish used as '*relleno*', [filling], and she doesn't yet have the money for a concrete floor. It is Jaqueline who has lost two children in the years since my last visit. One died of diarrheal disease, nobody knows what happened to the other and I can only wonder what will be the fate of her and her two babies now.

Her despair fills the tiny space. It is as if the house, built in a space of conflict, somehow has tension sealed into its walls. The flimsiness of the construction seems at once to echo and remind the occupier of their fragile sense of self. There is I suggest a parallel between the ways in which the structures of the callejón and the cañada affect social practices and the ways in which the built space of the home affects more private emotions, intimate friendships and a sense of personal identity. It is a relationship I will explore further within this chapter.

The house you end up living in is not the one you had imagined. It is ugly, cramped and jerry built: devoid of material comfort and constantly under threat from state violence, the hurricane, the landslide, the invasions of the cañada and of the tiguere. The home evokes a sense of disappointment and feelings of vulnerability. Of course, not all homes are the same, but feelings of envy or shame only compound the residents' difficulties. There is an acute awareness of who lives slightly better than their neighbours (those who own a fridge or a house of concrete blocks), and of whose plight is worse.

Perhaps the worst places to live are the *barrancones*.¹³⁹ Ironically, these barrack like structures were originally erected by the government as temporary housing for those people evicted from another barrio and forcibly moved to La Ciénaga/Los Guandules in the 1950s. There are three *barrancones* left in the barrio, the others have burnt down (their close proximity to each other makes them an obvious fire hazard). They are located on the higher and supposedly 'better' ground of Los Guandules, an example of the heterogeneity of the barrio to which I referred in my introduction. In most cases the original inhabitants have long gone but the *barrancones* have become permanent homes. Long sheds less than an arm's width apart, each one is divided into about sixteen 'homes' of two rooms without latrines or running water.

Tatty lives with her two children in one of these rooms, a space of about ten foot by six. They use her brother's latrine (he lives at the end of the *barrancon*) and a neighbour

extends her hosepipe when Tatty gets home from work, so she can fill her water containers. There are fourteen other families in the barrancon. Tatty doesn't know who they are, her working hours are too long, but her nine year old daughter Ileana can recite a list of family names and doings. There is no breeze inside this stiflingly small space. It is crowded, hard to move around and even harder to converse. The partitions between Tatty and her neighbours on each side are flimsy and don't go right up to the ceiling. The sounds of bachata from one side compete with rap from the other and another booming base behind. These three unbearably loud but virtually indistinguishable sounds bounce off the wall in front and are complicated for a while by two people who fight on the doorstep. Tatty's own television, on at full volume, is inaudible. 'Inside, inside one feels desperate, I long to sleep in a bed which isn't mine. This unbalances you totally...', she tells me, a striking inversion of my own longing for my London home, my own bed.¹⁴⁰

Tatty's house, like Jaqueline's and the majority of others in the barrio, is unhomely: it is structurally unsound, aesthetically displeasing and a site of anxiety, not least because the elements of noise and other rubbish cannot be kept outside with ease. Freud described the unhomely or the uncanny (the two concepts were closely linked in his writings) as a

¹³⁹ The word derives from the sheds or barracks used to house slaves or hold those in transit.

¹⁴⁰ '*Dentro, dentro uno se siente desesperada quiero dormir en una cama que no es mía. Eso desequilibra uno totalmente.*' Tatty is typical in having moved houses several times, both from one barrio to another and within the barrio. The barrancon is her third house in this barrio and she 'owns' it. (She had previously put down a deposit of RD\$ 3,000 for a new home in another barrio - the transaction turned out to be illegal and she lost the money, a story I have heard so many times). 'God made me for something else' she tells me and it seems so painfully true.

sense of unease, dread and, ultimately a feeling of internal confinement and suffocation.¹⁴¹ More than a simple sense of not belonging Freud's writings on the unhomely convey the propensity of the familiar to turn on its owners. An apparently simple and central idea, such as the home, can in certain contexts become de-familiarised, a place of horror, a place where the boundaries between inside and out become confused and cannot be easily drawn.¹⁴² These theoretical ideas of the unhomely bring together the structural and the psychological issues of home, in a similar way to that in which I explored the public spaces of the barrio. The concept of the unhomely opens up the meaning of dwelling: the place of the individual within the city, a home for the psyche.

The architectural historian Vidler has suggested that there has been a resurgent interest in the uncanny as a metaphor for fundamentally unlivable conditions.¹⁴³ Interestingly, he locates his discussion of vagabond architecture (to which I referred in chapter one), within this wider exegesis of the 'modern unhomely'. To situate an exploration of the possibilities of 'home' in La Ciénaga within this wider context of the intellectual uncanny and the vagabond architecture of the barrio is helpful, because it brings together the two uncomfortable paradoxes which surround the idea of home within the barrio. Firstly, as Amparo explains below, the vagabond architecture of La Ciénaga at once intensifies the need for a home (to escape the mud and the violence), at the same time that the

¹⁴¹ Vidler 1992: 22, 39

¹⁴² Vidler 1992: 7

¹⁴³ Vidler 1992: x

architectural characteristics (both physical and emotional) mean that the house can never be a 'real' home.

The second paradox turns on the relationship between permanence and mobility represented by ideas of home. Vagabond architecture, as I discussed in chapter one, represents a form of mobility which terrifies the residents of La Ciénaga. The home is an attempt to find refuge and permanence, to shore up one's own identity as a fixed city dweller as opposed to a roving subject. Mella has described the barrio home in Santo Domingo as a place of 'sporadic permanence' (my translation), a phrase which seems to perfectly encapsulate the ways in which the residents wish for a stable home within La Ciénaga at the same time as they hold onto a dream of living elsewhere in the city, or better still in New York.¹⁴⁴ Residents themselves do not wish to be vagabonds, floating flotsam like the litter which surrounds them. At the same time, the idea of permanent residence within the barrio is abhorrent; they do not wish to be imprisoned within the home, or the barrio in which their homes are located.

I will explore these paradoxical issues further in this chapter, looking firstly at the relationship between the home and the barrio which surrounds it. Crossing the threshold, I will then look inside the house, at the way the home is organised and lived, and then at the inner self, concentrating more closely on the relationship between the built space and individual emotions, the residents' sense of identity. This exploration remains located

within my wider inquiry as to the relationship between the built space and the emotions:
a way to see the barrio differently and to re-imagine solutions to the difficulties the
residents face.

LOCATING THE HOME WITHIN THE BARRIO

<i>'La casa es refugio, pero es debido a las</i>	'The house is a refuge but that's just
<i>condiciones del barrio, porque las</i>	because of the conditions in the barrio,
<i>condiciones del barrio son que a equis hora</i>	because the conditions in the barrio are that
<i>uno no puede salir, no por los vecinos pero</i>	at x hour one can't go out, not because of
<i>por los maleantes que aparezcan. Pero si</i>	the neighbours but because of the hoodlums
<i>aquí hicieran calles, hicieran entradas, no</i>	who appear. But if they made streets here,
<i>seria así...'</i>	entrances, it wouldn't be like this....'

(Amparo)

The conditions of the barrio and their impact on the possibilities of home is a much
discussed subject within La Ciénaga. In particular there is an emphasis on the street.

'Casa sin calle no es casa...'; 'a house without a street is not a home'. Children, when
asked to map their barrio, draw streets in the place of the cañada, and depict the winding

¹⁴⁴ Mella 1993: 36

callejones with the wide and even line of the urban planner.¹⁴⁵ This insistence on the role of the street is born partly from the hatred with which the callejón is regarded (the difficulties of the mud and the violence which lurk on the doorstep) and partly from an internalised norm as to what a house should be like: a 'real' home is one above the bridge, a house which borders the street on a grid.

There is some ambiguity in this emphasis since the callejón, despite being talked about as the worst place to live, can in practice be the most homely of places; you can lend things, chat, watch one another's children. Yet the callejón is also the site of 'delinquent' social behaviour and associated with practices and feelings which residents want to exclude, making the refuge of home so important. These quotidian difficulties emphasise the failure of the house to match up to the idea exported from above the bridge. A failure which is constantly emphasised by the presidential threat of eviction and the accompanying promise of the state apartment.

'Queremos calles para que pase la gente no avenidas que pisotean a la gente'

'We want streets where people can pass not the avenidas where people are trodden on'

graffiti parish church wall, Domingo Savio

Assaulted on the one hand by the *avenida*, one of the despised presidential boulevards, and on the other by the callejón and the cañada, the spaces where the streets should be,

¹⁴⁵ Cáceres 1992: Map # 10

the residents of La Ciénaga long for the middle road, the ordered grid of street and home (*si tuviera calles...*).

The presidential promise of the state apartment is constantly repeated, a promise of a new home, theoretically available to all.¹⁴⁶ The experience of previous evictions, the presence for example of the *barrancones*, is a reminder however that only a few will benefit; this knowledge leads to internal tensions and divisions within the *barrio*, rivalries which are in turn ruthlessly manipulated by the president. The threat of the *desalojo* has been maintained (the decree, the constant presence of the marines). At the same time, carefully deployed state rumours (the political *chisme* from above the bridge) convince many that they might after all be the successful ones and be given a state apartment. The propaganda of media images; the president handing over keys to an old and frail lady and the daily inaugurations of new buildings, are enough to convince those who are wavering that there is no need to defend their *barrio*: the president does have their interests at heart.¹⁴⁷

There is then a yearning for state architecture, the promised '*alivio*', the 'release' of a new house which would erode shame. For many the state apartment has come to represent 'home' despite the widely publicised difficulties of living in these small

¹⁴⁶ Balaguer's presidential election campaign slogan and promise for 1991 was '*el techo es un derecho*', 'the roof is a right'; expressing his intent to carry his construction programme of the 1980s into the next decade.

¹⁴⁷ Divisive internal politics made my attempts to 'map' the *barrio* in 1993 impossible; rumours as to who would be given an apartment led people to deny that they knew their neighbours and refuse to plot their own home. (Cottam 1994: 29)

concrete boxes. Their poor ventilation, crumbling construction and the lack of outside space make them in many senses as unhomely as the precarious houses of La Ciénaga. Their popularity can be seen as a crude example of the way in which the state can manipulate norms around services, in this case housing, and the ways in which an aesthetic can be exported from above the bridge.

In the Dominican context, Lopez Penha has documented how the traditional preference for a house rather than an apartment began to change with the upper class constructions of luxury apartments such as the Naco Complex.¹⁴⁸ More generically Lefebvre has used the example of housing to illustrate how the ‘ruling classes’ change both ideas and fashions around functions to suit their needs; those of profit accumulation and the expansion of their private and political power.¹⁴⁹ Lefebvre cites this manipulation of needs as an example of the ‘functional abstraction’ to which I referred in my introduction. Not only do the ‘ruling classes’ impose ideas, their dominance all too easily has the effect of crushing alternative ideas; the imagination, he implies, is bulldozed. Certainly in Santo Domingo the housing debate has turned in recent decades on the polar extremes of the apartment and the *desalojo*. The positions within alternative debates about housing improvements, *barrio* upgrading and appropriate architecture, were effectively silenced during the long years of Balaguer’s presidency.

¹⁴⁸ López Penha 1992: 260

¹⁴⁹ Lefebvre 1974/91: 316, 317

Within La Ciénaga views on the home and housing change over time and (in part) in response to the manipulation of norms above the bridge. When I first stayed in La Ciénaga in 1993 views on the desalojo and the home (the two are closely connected) were not homogenous. There was a sharp division between those who rejected the state threat of the desalojo (the defense of the barrio) and those who longed for the apartment in another place. By 1996 the boundaries of these arguments had blurred as had the boundaries between their supporters. The dominant wish appeared to be '*que arreglan..*', that they 'fix' the barrio by building apartments *within* La Ciénaga.

La Ciénaga, once a denigrated site, was by 1996 widely spoken of within the barrio, as the 'heart' of the city. A place once perceived by the residents to be marginal was now known to be valued. Attitudes had shifted in part within the context of an above bridge (presidential) rhetoric which had been adopted below the bridge. Importantly however the construction of the avenidas (proposed and completed) had opened up the once inaccessible heart, adding value in real financial terms. As the avenidas which border the barrio and the colonial port were inaugurated, the barrio became both physically and visibly accessible. The possibilities of land speculation could be seen both by those who daily cross the bridges and by those who live below. Thus, those who constantly exhorted me not to return to La Ciénaga because they feared for my life, invariably suggested in the same breath that I buy a house there.

The way in which the ideal of and attitudes towards housing have moved over time in the barrio presents a striking parallel with the ways in which the structures and goals of the community have shifted (see chapter one). It is again evident how the below is at once estranged from but entangled with the wider city. Those who live in the barrio are affected by the dominant attitudes and stories above the bridge. There is an important methodological point here, unseen within current policy approaches. The influence of those above the bridge and the ways in which ideas move make the neutral statements of the World Bank that they will 'let ordinary people take control of their lives', and the participatory methods of Oxfam and others which aim to sound out opinions below the bridge, rather more complicated than the organisations themselves seem to realise.

The current silence around the participatory process, the lack of an explicit understanding that what passes for participation, is all too often a repetition of the logic of those above the bridge, however democratically the process itself is carried out, might be seen as an intrinsic part of the 'abstraction' process I referred to above: a multiplicity of conflicting views and the way in which they are shaped, is eclipsed and presented as neutral. The ways in which attitudes and stories change below the bridge is a pertinent reminder of what Fraser has called 'the politics of need interpretation'. Quoting Foucault, she writes, 'need is also a political instrument, meticulously prepared, calculated and used.' Fraser

reminds us not only that needs are mobile, but that it is important to pay analytical attention to the ways they are established, interpreted and (perhaps) satisfied.¹⁵⁰

In the short term residents feel disempowered: the real home has streets: it is a dream of modern city living and it is located above the bridge. Again, a parallel can be drawn with the process through which the community is defined in such a way that the barrio resident is always outside. Within the barrio, the home too represents a subjective experience from which the resident of La Ciénaga is excluded. It is this sense of exclusion which explains the pejorative way in which the house is spoken about; denigrated as *esa barraca*, *casucha*, *ranchito*; ‘that shack’. The words invoke a sense of distance and shame, not dissimilar in tone to the ways in which residents attempt to distance themselves from the barrio itself. At the same time, there is a heightened awareness of the threshold: the need to draw a boundary between the external conditions of the barrio (which include these subjective experiences of exclusion) and the possibilities of (resented) refuge inside the home.

¹⁵⁰ Fraser 1989: 161, 164

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

There is a disjuncture in La Ciénaga between the way the house is spoken about as opposed to lived (a further parallel to the differing ways in which the community is spoken about as opposed to acted upon). As I listen to the repeated denigrations of the ‘shack’, I simultaneously become aware of the gentler ways in which the house is inhabited; these are the melon eating moments, the myriad small kindnesses that go unremarked upon. To glimpse beyond the threshold is to see the adorned home decorated with plastic roses, lace cloths, posters cut from magazines.

Despite the talking and even if the home does not measure up to an ideal, the threshold marks a boundary between the hated outside and the (usually) cared for and protected interior. A determination that neither the behaviour of the street, nor the anxieties associated with the cañadas and the callejones, should enter the home, makes the threshold a closely, sometimes magically, guarded place. Above the door the *sabila*, *santiguada y bautizada*, [an aloe plant, sanctified and baptised] is hung. ‘*Se coje lucha*’, literally, I am told, it catches or seizes the conflict that might cross inside. Yet, both the nature of the forces that threaten to invade (the noise, the chisme, *el fucú*, the bewitched gaze), and the flimsy structure of the houses, mean that the boundaries between inside

and out cannot in practice be so easily drawn. This in itself becomes a source of tension and unease: the threshold is thus also the place where a sense of the unhomely begins.¹⁵¹

In La Ciénaga, the porous boundaries between the 'street' and the house constantly threaten the status of home the home as an interior refuge. In the afternoon hours, women gather in these spaces which are neither house nor street to play their games of barajas. These wild haired women are considered by many in the barrio to be rather dissolute. Secreted in a tiny space between the callejón, two walls of tin and those formed by the sheets hung out to dry, I watch a game by Moren's house. Aggression is tangible as the women smoke, argue, shout and bang their cards down on the table. It feels tense as other women crowd round, waiting for a turn, told off sharply if they talk - they might be giving clues away. The women fight over who is playing too fast, too slow. One accuses another of making faces at her. One of Moren's children, Darion, a little boy of about five reaches for the money of Yolanda. She calls him a thief, grabs him, hitting him several times round the face and biting his cheek hard. No one takes any notice. Moren's wan response is to remonstrate that her son is now crying making it harder for her to concentrate and she is already losing. Her daughter Pamela starts to cry, she's hungry but there isn't anything to eat. These are the micro violences which pervade every day

¹⁵¹ Baudrillard developed a fascination with what he termed 'elusive spaces'; spaces where the permeable nature of inside/outside transcends the traditional dividing lines, which formerly constructed spaces of refuge. His writing examines the relationship between the social and psychological significance of spaces and objects, suggesting that when dividing lines, such as those between inside and out, are transgressed, emotional stability becomes fugacious. (Baudrillard 1986/96: 19-21)

life in La Ciénaga: violences which seem to seep between the too permeable boundaries of the threshold.¹⁵²

The more the nature of the threshold and the protection of the home is discussed in La Ciénaga, the less it becomes clear whether it is the people, such as Moren and her wild friends, or the houses and spaces they occupy which are ‘odious’. This is a confusion which has parallels with the ways in which peoples’ sense of self and identity is not always separable from the cañada, as I discussed in chapter one. Negative emotions felt towards neighbours in this dense environment often seem to be displaced towards their houses. The idea of the ‘*casa pesada*’, the house which is ‘heavy’ with bad or wicked feelings, is one commonly referred to. These are homes which invoke an inexplicable feeling of fear; in Fautina’s words; ‘*temor de entrar que no se puede definir*’, ‘a fear of entering which you can’t define’. I was shown for example a house where a succession of three families had tried to live, without success.

Both the porous nature of the threshold and the somewhat dis-located nature of the external threats constructs a particular way of living and organising the space beyond the threshold. Beyond this porous threshold, the layout of the rooms and objects is, to the extent possible, designed to afford further protection from prying eyes and stray behaviour. The *sala*, the living room, is a noisy, transitory space where symbols of

¹⁵² Bourgois has written eloquently on the way violence pervades daily life in the barrio, shaping mainstream perceptions of ‘the ghetto’ in a manner completely disproportionate to its objective danger (1996: 34). I

prestige are displayed; photographs of children who have graduated from school, a fridge. More private spaces and objects are hidden, concealed from view by a curtain. In homes which contain more special objects, the curtain is an attempt to prevent the observations that would fuel the chisme. In homes where possessions are few, the curtain shields pride; no-one need know how little you own.

Noise (often something one would like to take refuge from) can itself become like a wall; it hides the confidential talking, more private sussurations which later cannot be heard even on my tapes.¹⁵³ The cacophony of music which it is said hides too the worries of the soul is used to put up boundaries, to ensure a sense of the inside.¹⁵⁴ The need for privacy constructs a way of living that has a particular logic of the barrio; what appears to the outsider as chaos is used at times intentionally to hide a more secret order.

These are particular ways of living which have social effects. There is an etiquette over who is invited in and how far. Both shame and fear of envy limit the possibilities of friendship; Amparo talks of the politics of visiting in an environment where you would rather not observe or have observed the days when you have nothing to cook; Josaira and Oscar talk of the sense of shame which makes it impossible to invite their schoolmates

do not feel threatened, but on some days (like the barrio residents) I do find the accumulatory effect of these small incidents and encounters to be like lacerations on the spirit.

¹⁵³ 'within walls, beneath skin', Contreras 1987

¹⁵⁴ Arismendy explained to me how 'respect' comes from the manipulation of noise; powerful sound systems turned towards those neighbours who have transgressed some social code.

from the higher ground of Los Guandules into their 'mud infested' homes.¹⁵⁵ To be invited to cross the threshold is to be invited into an inner domestic world and a close social circle.

SMALL OBJECTS OF DESIRE

'Objects are not without spirit. As living things they touch us in unimagined ways'.

bell hooks¹⁵⁶

I ask people what it is that they treasure inside their homes and Margarita begins to tell me about her television, her most cherished possession.¹⁵⁷ In asking people the question I am both further probing the meaning of home within the barrio and probing the process by which residents select what they see.

¹⁵⁵ Amparo and Fautina are neighbours; I was amazed to discover quite by accident towards the end of my last stay in La Ciénaga in 1997 that Amparo had never been into Fautina's house prior to my first visit in 1993 or on any occasion apart from the group meetings that take place around my visits over the years. Josaira points out that it is not just her shame that prevents visiting, but that the parents of her 'friends' in Los Guandules will not allow their children to visit La Ciénaga. It is important to remember, that in the eyes of those above the bridge, La Ciénaga and Los Guandules are one barrio. Below the bridge, the territorial demarcations are socially divisive.

¹⁵⁶ *An Aesthetic of Blackness* (1990: 104)

¹⁵⁷ Almost all the women chose household durables as opposed to adornments or smaller personal items. As Amparo explained with respect to her treasured item, the small washing machine she eventually managed to acquire; 'this is not a material thing it's spiritual'; the sense of relief which the machine affords as she juggles the demands of three jobs and four children seven days a week, far outweighs any other possession. These small portable washing machines which became widely available in the mid 1990s are 'lent' to neighbours as a form of income generation.

The psychoanalyst Bollas suggests that 'the objects of our world are potential forms of transformation'. The process of selecting objects is subjective: particular memories and meanings are evoked and a personal story is told. In this way, Bollas writes, the selection of objects is the selection of a mental state. The process is one with parallels to psychoanalysis: the process is part of constructing a new experience in which both analyst and analysand are transformed.¹⁵⁸ His work presents not only an interesting way of thinking about the importance of everyday objects (for Bollas every day objects have a significance similar to that which I have suggested the built space has for the emotions and identities of those who live amongst it), it also emphasises the importance of the selection process; the way in which people choose and talk about objects.

The stories from which I quote in this section were recorded during a series of group dynamics in which women were asked by me to bring with them either a treasured object or, if their chosen object were too large, some representation of it.¹⁵⁹ In each group the women began to look and think differently about 'home', both as they selected and later as they talked about their objects. It is important to emphasise however that here, as elsewhere, the women are not always rehearsing views they have previously expressed and the way in which their attitudes differ, shift and change during the conversation is in many ways the important edge of this chapter.

¹⁵⁸ Bollas 1993: 4,6

For Margarita her treasured television expresses her independence in more ways than one. Like so many in the barrio she was brought to the city to work as a maid in the house of a distant relative. She was eight years old with the promise of escape from a small village in the east of the country. She dreamed of the city and of education, a dream shared by her mother who, with nine mouths to feed, despaired for her children's future. The urban reality was one of '*esclavitud*', 'slavery'; she was at someone's beck and call, night and day, forbidden even to watch the television. Margarita determined she would have a television of her own and escape the 'slavery'. This was something she achieved by the age of fifteen, although by a means (marriage) that was to bring her more trouble as became evident in the months to come.

In La Ciénaga, a world where the violence of the cañadas and the dangers of the callejones make one turn inside, the window of the telenovela has taken on a further importance; the television becomes a temple of dreams. It is hard to imagine what the barrio was like before the television. Silenced only by the power cuts it is on in most homes twenty four hours a day. You have to be a native of the barrio to decipher the shrill noise and fuzzy reception but it provides an escape for children and adults alike. 'They - the tigueros, the eviction - can take anything, but not the television', I am told repeatedly.

¹⁵⁹ See Annexe A: On Methodology

Like the sofa and the stove, the television provides a sense of security not just because one can stay inside and entertain oneself, but because ownership is something that might be realistically aimed for.

<i>'Uno se enferma de pensar en los problemas de la casa entonces uno se pone a sentirse bien, uno puede tu ve' comprar la estufa'</i>	<i>'One becomes ill thinking of all the problems of the house so, you concentrate on feeling better, you know, one can at least buy a stove' (Alba)</i>
<i>'Porqué el pobre no puede aspirar? Los ricos entre más tienen, más quieren y tienen buenas condiciones, carros, de todo. Entonces porqué el pobre no puede aspirar? Y si uno no hiciera eso sería cada día peor. El hecho de ser pobre, no tener familia y no aspirar a tener casa mejor o un sitio mejor entonces no hay aspiraciones y somos gente diferente'</i>	<i>'Anyway, why can't the poor aspire? The more the rich have the more they want and they live well, with cars, the lot. So, why shouldn't the poor person have aspirations. If you didn't, each day would be worse. Just the fact of being poor, no family, not aspiring to have a better house in a better place. Well, without those aspirations we would be very different people.'</i> (Amparo)

For both Alba and Amparo, the treasured objects become a form of escape. Once again however, apparently shared language and shared views hide very different attitudes to the home and the objects themselves. Alba dissimulates behind her stove; her concern not to think in ways that might make her ill sounds similar and is related to her position on the

barrio itself. For Amparo however survival depends very much on thinking about other homes, other possibilities. Both women are dreaming (of objects) to escape, however the form their dreams take is very different. Alba's dream is one of avoidance. Amparo's dream by contrast is one which builds a sense of dignity; aspirations are the first step in both affirming one's identity and galvanising change.

'It is without [day]dreams that one is poor'; the importance of aspirations (which are linked to the home and its objects) for a sense of self is emphasised by the women.¹⁶⁰ Defiant dreaming contains a nascent, alternative agenda, a way to re-imagine the barrio. These day dreams are neither the expert opinion, 'local knowledge' or the oppositional (and ultimately futile if fashionable) 'resistance'. Dreams do however tap into the creative sense of a 'something else'.¹⁶¹ Within this thesis, I am suggesting that dreams should be taken seriously: I concentrate on their practical implications for policy making in more detail in chapters five and six. Here I want briefly just to emphasise their importance and to suggest that to ignore the dream is to put into play a process of structural and psychological destruction (what Freud of course would argue to be the inevitable effect of sublimation of desire).

¹⁶⁰ I refer here and in the discussion which follows to day dreams as opposed to dreams that occur in the sleep (the latter I am always told are impossible in La Ciénaga, where one must always be on guard and 'sleep with one eye open'). Nightmares however do occur and I discuss these in more detail in chapter four.

¹⁶¹ de Lauretis 1990: 145. (see introduction)

In concrete terms, I am arguing that, to neglect those ideas expressed within the day dreams of residents is to produce a policy or solution which is rejected. The policy provision which results may just be unwanted and ignored or, it may be destroyed by those it was meant to benefit, the vandalism of resentment. (In chapter five I will look at the reaction of the residents of La Ciénaga when the government provides them with an unwanted project.) More serious is the underlying danger of destroying people's initiative. When aspirations are thwarted a negative loop is started; the only escape left open are the dreams of dissimulation; those of Alba in this context. The interpretive dimension of needs assessment, to which I referred above (the work of Fraser and Foucault) must be made explicit. It is not the 'basic needs' defined by developers, the city council, and the language of the community model, which are necessarily of most importance to residents, but rather their basic desires. To limit those who are 'poor' to certain spaces, homes or objects is to keep people poor and deny the possibility of re-imagining not only the barrio, but oneself.

As the women talk, the possibility of dreaming alternative worlds into being is made visible, and then, eclipsed. The aspirations do bring their own disappointments; perhaps the stove can be acquired, but it involves a process of humiliating struggle; to *fiar* [loan], to invent another address. Objects seem far from 'durable'; they are shoddy, they break or they are lost to the pawn shop. The desired consumption levels, those of the rich above the bridge to whom Amparo refers, are not attainable. Influenced by Barthes who

has suggested that buildings contain both 'dream and function',¹⁶² I have already argued that the 'vagabond architecture' of La Ciénaga depends almost entirely on a dream; the street is missing, the house with its disposable walls and leaking roof does not 'function'. The household objects, as they are discussed, increasingly seem too to be composed of dreams.

Household goods are known collectively as '*trastes*', which literally translated means junk (also a dashed hope or plan).¹⁶³ This depreciative term came to seem increasingly apposite as over the weeks that followed Margarita's house gradually emptied of possessions. Two weeks after the above conversations, sitting in her home, I noticed that the television had gone. I was already used to the constant circle in which household objects are acquired and then lost again to the pawn shops but, after the heartfelt story she had told, I was dismayed. In response Margarita could only raise her hands helplessly. I didn't know then that this was the moment when her life would start to unravel but I did wonder, once again, what could be the meaning of home in a place such as La Ciénaga; a place where it seemed risky and complex even to become attached to a household object.

Just as the home can gradually be stripped of possessions, so the women increasingly attempted to distance themselves verbally from the *trastes*. My attempts for example to

¹⁶² Barthes 1982: 239

suggest that the turquoise painted walls of Yonesa's home or Margot's cared for interiors might be a beautiful home were met with strenuous denial. Germania was scathing in tone when I admired her home, her sofa still pristine in its plastic covers;

<i>'...disparates que tengo ahí...ay si muy</i>	'...junk which I've got there...oh yes its
<i>lindo, pongo aquí, pongo ahí, una matica</i>	very pretty, I put things here, put them
<i>aquí, que se yo, pero no, puedo de'</i>	there, a little plant here, whatever, but no, I
<i>prenderme de eso.'</i>	can get rid of all that.' (Germania)

Germania refers with disdain not only to her trastes, but to the way that they are arranged within her home, the ease with which they could be left behind. There is in her words, what Rose would call a 'proto feminist agenda'; 'We might say that in order to define herself as an autonomous agent in the world [a woman] has, so dramatically, to throw off everything, including the world itself if necessary, which society conceives her to be. There is precisely no place in the world for a woman on these terms, no place...'164 It is of course not just that the objects don't measure up, but, just as the women cannot be limited to the basic needs of the poor, so some recognise that aspiring means throwing off the limited domain of the home. It is also a more generalised fear of disappointment, of collapsing dreams, which leads people to distance themselves from their material things and attempt to define the 'home' in a different way.

¹⁶³ *traste* [OSD] utensils, junk, fret (music) to move...around (colloq.), a plan or idea dashed

When the world outside is tense, home becomes a refuge because you can escape both other people and other anxieties;

‘Hay días que tengo un sudor y no soporto que me pregunten nada.’ *‘There are days when I sweat and I can’t stand people asking me anything.’*

(Fautina)

There is a marked sense of ease in the way the house is inhabited; the dressing in hair rollers, *chancletas* [cheap plastic sandals] and often little more than underwear. ‘You can take off your shoes, sit how you like’, Amparo tells me, demonstrating. Gesture, in the words of Lefebvre, seems ‘posed to push discourse off the pedestal’¹⁶⁶; just as the talking of the denigrated shack belies the cared for interiors, so the gestures inside the home seem to get underneath the language with which the interiors are discussed. What is revealed is a home defined by the senses, a place where emotions might roam.

Home is a sense of freedom. *‘Lo mejor del mundo es tener tu casa, reirse, hacer bulla’*, ‘the best thing in the world is to have your own house, laugh, make a lot of noise’

Margarita tells me, celebrating her own space and making a comparison with her work above the bridge. At work, ‘one has to be very humble, never opinionate’. In the context of a barrio and a wider society where a premium is put on order, often brutally enforced by the state, the ability to ‘rule one’s own space’ takes on inestimable importance.

well as relations is the nearest anyone comes in these conversations, to commenting on how family relations are dependent on the material.

¹⁶⁶ Lefebvre 1974/91: 216. In *La Ciénaga* I have paid acute attention to gesture, which does indeed often appear to push the ‘common sense’ story off the pedestal and open new interpretations of what is spoken. See Annexe A: On Methodology.

'Ay sí, es mi palacio donde nadie me puede atropellar' 'Oh yes, it's my palace where nobody can trample on me'¹⁶⁷ (Alba)

In this context, even the always grumpy Alba changes tack; suddenly her shack becomes a palace. 'It is only in the home that we can be queens.' Amparo tells me.¹⁶⁸

Home is a place without the authoritarian commands experienced elsewhere (such as within the 'community') and, therefore explicitly a place where your personality can be expressed;

'Uno no está cohibiendo parte de la personalidad de uno, verdad?' 'One isn't inhibiting part of your own personality, right?' (Juliana)

More than an expression of the self, the home is '*el centro de uno*', your 'own centre', a place that affirms your identity.¹⁶⁹ As ever it is a fragile affirmation. Two weeks later Margarita cannot make the noise she celebrated; both her television and radio had been pawned and her husband had become increasingly violent and controlling, as they slipped daily into ever more desperate poverty.

As time passes in our discussions, the stories and definitions of home move from those connected to the exterior and interior structures to those connected to interior feelings and emotions. The house is a home by virtue of those who live there, the family, and, because

¹⁶⁷ The word *atropellar* carries carrying connotations of the military, chaos and brutal physical violence.

¹⁶⁸ A lovely and unknowing echo to Gabriela Mistral; '*todas ibamos a ser reinas...*'

it offers personal space or rather, a sense of private time, in a more private, but still busy space. Small rituals are performed as if in private, in order to give the individual time to think. Bathing for example is often carried out over a small iron tub in view of others, but it is to the extent possible preserved as a private moment (literally a moment).

On one of the rare evenings that Amparo and I were home together alone, she explained to me how, in her home, she had taken an hour a week of private time behind her curtain, to put herself through a process of self analysis. She had read lots of books and was trying to recover a traumatic incident of her adolescence which, she felt, was affecting her and making her over sensitive. 'We poor people can't afford psychologists and psychoanalysts' she told me. Her commitment to the process in the face of the adversity which surrounded her and her confidence that she was slowly making progress, moved me deeply. I knew that Amparo, usually ready to rise to any challenge, had days when she suffered from a deep and paralysing depression.

Home is the family space: this idea has its moment in the conversation and then too, starts to falter, as if used up. As with the discussion on material possessions, time passes, opinions accrete and gradually change. 'A home has to have a lot of love, understanding between the children and the husband, how to live as a couple' Magaly tells me. '*Ay sí, es vivir en pareja*', 'Oh yes, it's about living as a couple', Yonesá repeats

¹⁶⁹ It is important to note that the house affirms the identity of the resident as home and as workplace. Within the parameters of the current research I was not able to explore the ramifications of 'homeworking'.

to general murmurs of approval. The conversation flows until it is eventually Yonesa again who asserts that happiness inside the home doesn't have to be the *pareja*, the couple;

'...*si tiene que ser así nos vamos a acabar!*' '...if it's got to be like that it will be the end of us !' (Charro)

There is wide assent and Charro the beautiful and outspoken beautician (the one who is voted at the beginning to ask me the '*pregunta de rigor*', the 'required question' as to where and with whom I live in the city when I am not in the barrio) continues;

<i>'Bueno Hilaria, para mí el hogar significa</i>	'Well Hilary, for me the home means the
<i>el sitio donde yo me mantengo siempre y</i>	place where I support myself and my
<i>mis hijos - ve'! - porque hay personas que</i>	children - you see ! - because there are
<i>preocupan de hacer un hogar con el</i>	people who worry about making a home
<i>esposo, el papa de los hijos tu ve' pero no</i>	with a husband, the father of the children
<i>es necesariamente vivir con el papá de los</i>	you know, but it isn't necessary to live
<i>hijos tener un hogar.'</i>	with the father of your children to have a
	home.'

Charro lives alone with her two small children in a home of two rooms; the front one is her beauty salon, the back one has a bed for her and her children and a two ring gas stove plugged in perilously near the string and shelf which hold all her possessions. Watching her wash up in this space, one small bowl of water and dishes in one hand, a child in her

other arm, is to witness an art form every bit as skilled and dexterous as the hair styles she creates. Her comment is made in the style of a *confianza*, in a tone of voice that suggests she is telling me something secret and daring. Her words however are greeted by the others (almost all of whom live in a similar way) with shouts of '*eso*', '*así es*', '*así mismo*'; 'exactly', 'that's how it is', 'quite so'.

There are problems in the home and the difficulty of domestic relations is slowly admitted. The tension of too many people makes the idea of home a lie;

<i>'Unas veces es mentira [el hogar]; tanta gente en la casa - hay veces que la gente se deprime por lo que hay en casa.'</i>	<i>'Sometimes it's a lie [the home]; so many people in the house - there are times when people are depressed about what there is in the home'. (Marisol)</i>
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Marisol is one who responds that she thought she was the only one who felt this way, 'those days when you don't want to go back home'. In Magaly's group the same rhythm unfolds;

<i>"viven" sí, pero si no hay amor, eso no es hogar - golpes a la mujer, golpes al hijo...'</i>	<i>'they 'live' but if there isn't any love, that isn't a home - blows to the woman, blows to the child...' (Germania)</i>
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Violence from partners, the (unthinkable) violence from your sons; violence which cannot be physically shut out. Violence which is alluded to (never in the personal tense) and then elided.

If the barrio is despised and the desired objects cannot be afforded, personal relationships at least are 'free' and apparently open to all. They are used to define the home and yet, the inside of the house in too many (not all) cases becomes the site of domestic tension. Stories about domestic violence are endless; for Margot, the barrio itself was a refuge from a violent husband - one of the first people to live in La Ciénaga she built her home in a place that was scarcely urban to escape the 'tyranny' of her children's father. It is hard to portray the severity of the problem and yet not exaggerate. Amparo is one who has an easy relationship with her partner and her children (both her teenage daughter Maria Elena and her younger sons) and yet her home is not free from tension either. There are many evenings when I return to Amparo's home, this house of pink zinc where I stay, to find that there is nothing to eat and everyone is bad tempered. The cause is never spoken of as if even within this small circle it is too painful to mention.

Troubled family relationships cannot in practice be so easily distanced from the material tensions brought home from the other side of the threshold; the stress of scarce economic resources. Cela has written about the psychological costs to the family of the need to work so hard. He cites the example of the colmado, where the whole family must work round the clock for the success of the enterprise.¹⁷⁰ Within the private space jealousies and insecurities fester. They are both cause and effect of the fragile home.

There are homes in which the frustration at not being able to provide is more volatile. A couple of years earlier Margarita's husband Vacilio left the barrio in a *yola*¹⁷¹ for Puerto Rico, a common but desperate effort to change his fortunes. He was soon picked up by the police and deported, a changed man according to Margarita, without hope. She kept the family together selling fish and Vacilio eventually invested the profits in a van. His plan was to use the van as a porter but he was cheated and his money disappeared. On a Tuesday in April Margarita lost her job - the owner of her fish stall sold up and left for New York. He had offered to sell the stall to her for RD \$ 4,000 (about US\$ 350) but she had just given all her savings to Vacilio. She never mentioned this to me at the time; the first evidence was the disappearance of her television set. After her *trastes* [household goods] had gone she appealed to her sister who, married to a man in Villa Juana, a better (still poor) barrio, was too proud to visit her in La Ciénaga, but sent money. Finally she broke into the small tin savings jar that all the women have, to buy rice for her four children. Vacilio who had increasingly been spending his days lounging in the door way of the crack post nearby, turned first on her, then on her children and finally to her heartbreak moved into the next callejón with a sixteen year old girl whom they had

¹⁷⁰ Cela 1989: 3

¹⁷¹ *Yolas* are the small boats in which thousands of Dominicans attempt to escape to Puerto Rico or Miami every year. The Mona Straits are some of the most dangerous shark infested waters in the world and it is not known how many people perish. Hundreds arrive successfully only to be discovered by the port authorities; I know many in the barrio who have been returned in this way, their lifesavings consumed by the expensive and failed effort.

watched grow up. This is a barrio reality, a terrible but not uncommon experience. Yet, she doesn't tell anyone, not even Margot her neighbour and comadre.¹⁷²

Lack of personal trust within the home starts with the conjugal relationship and mirrors the fractious friendships of the callejón. The roots however go deeper: these are the archaeologies of self Amparo hopes to uncover; the imprints left by where and how you grew up. Stories of the absent father, the possessive mother and the rivalries between the *hijos de madre o padre*, the half brothers or sisters born to either the mother or the father with a different partner, are widespread. In his anthropological study of six of the city's barrios, Cela has explored the culture of the family. The tightest bond he notes is that between the mother and the child. The father is usually an 'addition', noted either for his absence or his (often more complicated) sporadic presence. Cela explores the way the father, unable to command 'respect' outside the barrio, exercises his power within the home in ways which are frequently machista and often violent. The presence of children from a previous partner is an additional tension and complication within families where resources are scarce.¹⁷³

The difficulty is that the myth of the ideal nuclear family, of two loving parents, living with their children, is maintained within the barrio, as in other areas of the Dominican

¹⁷² The same lack of sharing occurs when Margot's eldest son is accused of killing someone and the victim's family pursue Margot, threatening to burn down her house. People hibernate; turn finally inside themselves.

Republic, despite the reality. Commenting more widely on the myths of family structure within Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole, Hardoy and Aguirre have documented a growth in the culture of guilt and blame, which they attribute to the nature of the categories used by social scientists and the increasingly politicised nature of research within a predominantly neo liberal regime of governments. While, as they explicitly state, it is important not to undermine the important effects of absent fathers and the (often related) effects of poverty, the studies create public perceptions amongst the poor, where mothers in particular begin to blame themselves.¹⁷⁴ A parallel can be drawn here with the way in which other 'tools' of the policy maker, such as that of the community project, encourage individuals or groups to see themselves in a particular way (see chapter one).

The profile of the barrio is not actually very different to that of the wider city where less than a third of women in couples are formally 'married' and less than half of children grow up with both blood parents.¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, studies of the city from previous decades illustrate that the family structures and patterns found in the barrio and elsewhere in the city are not new. Corten for example comments that fifty eight percent of the children in his barrio sample taken in the 1960s lived with only one parent. Equally of interest is his observation that this situation (despite being that of the majority of

¹⁷³ Cela, undated PhD thesis: 360 - 377. I have no space here to discuss other aspects of family structures and roles, either successful or unsuccessful. I am aware however that the over possessive mother has a significant imprint on the child that has been little researched, see Olivier 1980/89.

¹⁷⁴ Hardoy and Aguirre 1993: 52-60.

¹⁷⁵ Only 24 percent of all couples in the Dominican Republic are legally married and only 42 percent of children live with both blood parents. (Duarte and Tejada 1995: 86, 91)

households) was talked of as 'deviant' within the barrio.¹⁷⁶ Feelings of unease in the barrio are generated by a sense that you do not live according to the 'norms' upheld above the bridge (again, a parallel to the community). Thus for example couples talk of being 'married' although they are not. Shame at the location of your home is compounded by a sense that not only can your house not mirror those above the bridge in physical form, you cannot achieve their white weddings and apparent bliss.¹⁷⁷

Definitions of the home move from those which include the house and its objects, to discussions of the family and personal freedom. Yet, even as the definitions move, there is a constant comparison with those above the bridge. What happens inside the home is a source of anxiety not only due to the quotidian violence, aggression, and arguments but due to the constant sense that family life 'should not be like this': the familiar has turned on its owners; the house has become unhomely. The response on the part of residents is a further turning inwards: the home becomes a site of dissimulation, and ultimately a prison.

¹⁷⁶ Corten 1965: 8

¹⁷⁷ Meal times in La Ciénaga are a further illustration of the way in which neither the physical nor the social form can be mirrored. Families in La Ciénaga never eat together; limitations of time (the balancing of several jobs at different times), the small space, the lack of plates and ultimately the uncertainty as to whether there will be anything to eat if you do return, rules out a practice which above the bridge defines the notion of home and family. (Those who lecture these same mothers in public hospitals about the nutrition of their children seem completely unaware of these complications.) It is a cruel irony that one of the two cheap posters that adorn the homes of many depicts a circle of dogs with bibs tucked in, seated at a table eating with knives and forks.

HOME: THE PRISON

As a sense of the home as a refuge falls apart, there are two common responses.¹⁷⁸ The first is to increasingly concentrate on the home as a mythical ideal. Spoken of in the quasi religious terms, also used for the community that I have referred to earlier, the home is located in the imagination. The second is to see the home not as a comforting refuge but rather as a prison; one feels locked inside. The two reactions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. They are both a further form of turning inwards; the emotional escape in the first instance (a form of dissimulation), the mental prison in the second.

Fautina and her daughter Hilda talk of how the home is formed by the *bendición*; the process of blessing which Hilda received as a child before she went to sleep. The story draws directly on religious imagery, defining home in relation to a wider community of faith. Importantly, this is a 'community' which this family is not part of; they have never been to church. For Fautina, a young and glamorous grandmother whose house appeared to provide a home for an ever shifting population of her six children and their offspring,¹⁷⁹ 'home', '*mí casa*', 'my house' is her parents' house. While this use of '*mí casa*' to denote the parental home is common Dominican parlance, it takes on a very different connotation in Fautina's case. Her 'home' is a dreamt of place. It later emerges

¹⁷⁸ I do not mean to imply here that this is a neat, irreversible change; the idea falls apart within conversation, but emotions change within the day, over the years, people move from one position to another just as personal situations which seem desperate and inescapable change.

that she never knew her parents or saw their house. This home underlines the ambiguities of the concept; the contradictions in the role of the family and affective relations; what is idealised as opposed to what is lived.

A similar sense of contradiction underlies the shifting stories in which the home, once a comforting refuge, becomes the hated prison;

<i>'...vivimos como viejos...cohibido de</i>	<i>'...we live like old people...too inhibited to</i>
<i>salir...es como una carcel, uno no tiene</i>	<i>go out...it's [the house] like a prison, one</i>
<i>libertad.'</i>	<i>has no liberty.'</i> (Amparo)

The house is experienced as a prison in many different ways. Charro and her teenage friends laughingly recall how their families attempted to keep them inside the home when they were younger; *'tapadas'*, 'covered up'.¹⁸⁰ More recently for Charro it was her 'husband' (whom she has now left) who kept her imprisoned within her home. She admits however that the *presión*, the pressure of working at home (in her beauty salon) means that her house is still a place where she feels tense. She cannot easily escape either her clients or the demands of her two small children.

¹⁷⁹ Every time I visit Fautina her home seems to have shrunk not only because of the increasing number of grandchildren she adores but because she continues to raise her floor against the mud outside until you can no longer stand up inside.

¹⁸⁰ Literally 'with a lid on', 'brain boxed' [OSD]

For the men a form of curfew operates within the barrio. Both the perpetrators of the violence and the innocent experience the home and their corner of the barrio as a prison.

<i>‘fijate como hay un especie de toque de</i>	‘...look how there’s a sort of curfew - you
<i>queda - tiene que mantenerse en la casa o</i>	have to stay at home or on the banks [of
<i>en la orillita, para cuando viene la policia;</i>	the cañada], because when the police come;
<i>eso para ellos es un candado, un</i>	for them [the men] that’s a lock up, a
<i>sufrimiento...las mujeres salen y cosa - los</i>	suffering...women go out and things - the
<i>hombres, desde las 6.00 de la tarde...’</i>	men, from six o’clock in the evening...’

(Magaly)

Violence in the barrio comes and goes in waves. Magaly speaking here in 1996 refers to a particular moment prior to the national elections during which both the police and the military became particularly aggressive, seizing identity cards thus making the male residents invisible, and imprisoning individuals at random. During this period the women started to meet their sons returning from school and their partners who worked outside the barrio, on the border of the Avenida. This state terrorism was invisible above the bridge, never mentioned in the press for example. A less extreme involuntary curfew does in practice operate for women and many men at all times; even after three years my comadres never allowed me to walk alone after sunset.

Many who attempt to escape this violence, the zozobra of the callejón, find that the attempt to lock the door against the outside is double edged; you are locked in. This mental as opposed to physical sense of being locked in is what most bothers Amparo and

her friends. The troubles and constraints of the home threaten the possibilities of aspiring and dreaming discussed earlier. Juliana with her attractively hoarse voice takes up the point once again.

<i>Si uno se dedica solamente al hogar uno se</i>	If one devoted oneself only to the home
<i>va a morir, por dedicarse solamente a que</i>	one's going to die, to devote yourself only
<i>uno no tiene ni un mueble por la material</i>	to the fact that you haven't even got any
<i>eso es lo que tiene a uno quedandose atras.</i>	furniture, to the material things that keep
<i>Nadie va a sobrevivir solamente de</i>	you behind. Nobody is going survive only
<i>levantarse sancochar y ya, sin pensar en</i>	by getting themselves up, cooking and
<i>una ropa, que los niños estudien mejor.</i>	that's it, not thinking about clothes, that
	the children study better.' (Juliana)

The frustrations of the quotidian make the home a prison. To escape for these women is to think beyond, to dream.

The home then can be both a physical prison (one is often too scared to go outside)¹⁸¹ and a mental prison (one *feels* that one has no liberty). There is also a third form of imprisonment which, while it is never spoken about, I observe in numerous cases over the years. Those who live in La Ciénaga flee for home to escape the troubles of the callejón and the cañada. When the home too becomes troubled it often seems that the only path open is an attempt to flee the self. I watch many of the women I know, exhausted by the

¹⁸¹ I wondered at first whether those such as Marina who lived comparatively sumptuously behind concrete walls with a fridge, a stove, a mobile phone and more were prisoners of their own possessions fearing for

difficulties of their barrio and homes, hibernate within themselves. Magaly, an energetic COPADEBA leader whom I met in 1993 had, by 1996, lost her energy. She seemed somehow lost, deep within herself, a state not so much of depression as of suspension. In 1997 I returned to find her recently enrolled in literacy classes, applying skin lightening creams and wiggling about in a leopard skin leotard; 'don't I look *'muy sexy'*' she laughed when I greeted her. It was as if she had returned from another unreachable place.¹⁸²

This process of withdrawal into the self both emanates from and echoes the definition of the 'unhomely' to which I referred earlier: a feeling of internal confinement, of suffocation; the emotional prison.¹⁸³ To paraphrase Illich, in the (to be) bulldozed space, you can locate yourself, but you cannot have a home; 'the desire to dwell is a nightmare'.¹⁸⁴ Within the home chaos and tension lurk; the dreamed of emotional escape turns too often to the reality of intense domestic violence, the brutal small invasions of what is supposed to be shut out are instead internalised, they become a private nightmare. The meaning of inside/out is interrogated; a sense of feeling an outsider in your own home and ultimately within yourself, is conveyed.

example robbery. It appeared not; such wealth is in Marina's and other cases linked to state connections which also offer their own protection - Marina is a 'spy' for the PSRC, President Balaguer's party.

¹⁸² See Gut's discussion on 'conservation withdrawal' (Gut 1989: 14, 34) and my more detailed discussion of these cases in chapter four.

¹⁸³ The comparison made between the home and the prison locates the discussion within an interesting literature on prisons in which the idea of perspective and reversal is central. Bentham's most famous site of observation, the Panopticon, is the site of apparent freedom (just as the residents can apparently escape the gaze of the state) but real control (the tyranny of the tiguere and the decree). Perhaps what is most interesting about the Panopticon however is the inversion of vision; from the inward looking architecture of the hospital to the observation from the centre in the prison (Markus 1993: 123-125). In an eerie echo of Foucauldian theories of surveillance which take their starting point as an analysis of the Panopticon, Ciudad Alternativa boast that their satellite imagery means that they know what is going on inside every home !

The home is a Janus like construction: a place at once of escape and of imprisonment. A need for refuge in an unhomely place is tried out, lived and then abandoned in rage and despair. Home (like the community with which it is so often compared) is an idea borrowed from above the bridge and found to be inappropriate. Also like the community, the home becomes an important source of internal tension and dis-ease.¹⁸⁵ The concept of the home does not 'fit'; there is no private space, the 'right' possessions cannot be afforded and relations with neighbours and family are fractious. The sense of refuge, like the physical house, easily seems to fall apart.

To escape the emotions and social practices that are imbricated within the public spaces of the barrio, the residents flee for home. Once inside however the flimsy walls of the home seem only ever more resoundingly to echo the vulnerability of self, of those who live within them. The story might seem to be one of accumulated misery. And yet, despite the despair with which the current house is spoken about, the ideal is not abandoned; Jaqueline, Margarita and Alba all dream that their children will have a 'real home'. There is small obstinate hope here, and something more.

¹⁸⁴ Illich 1986: 22

¹⁸⁵ Interestingly Kovel notes that family neurosis arises at the historical point in capitalism that the community declines i.e. the tension is transferred from one site to the other (Kovel 1988: 128). Cela interprets this simultaneous idealisation and rejection of the home in terms of class: the home represents a middle class ideal, which is desired at the same time that the dominating practices of this class are despised.

The stories of home reveal an ambiguity between what is spoken and what is lived. There is a gap between the way the home is denigrated, described with dislike, or in mocking tones, and the often optimistic and imaginative way the house is inhabited and adorned. This is the space of loquacious gesture: the way the women move through and in their homes sometimes expresses more than the words they have to hand. These physical expressions, like the dreams I have referred to, the emotions and the soul, seem elusive. They are the imaginative equivalent of the physical threshold; visible (sometimes briefly) and then crossed; liminal spaces. Liminal spaces are in the words of hooks, the hardest spaces to occupy; '[they] feel unsafe because they are harder to inhabit than moving to one extreme'.¹⁸⁶ The imaginings and habitations of home, like the way in which the barrio is lived, convey (small) different understandings. Sometimes only fleetingly visible, they open up new stories and possibilities: that of dreaming a world into being.

To summarise, the stories of the home have opened up both current interpretations of the barrio and the possibilities of re-imagining place, they have also revealed the curious nature of the stories themselves; the dream element and the way in which stories shift and change, at times almost impossibly contradicting each other. Secondly, the importance of the wider city has been emphasised. Both the home and the barrio are seen and storied according to what is perceived to be the 'norm' and ideal above the bridge. Thus, I turn in the chapters which follow both to the city and to the nature of the storying process. I

start with the city in which the barrio and home are located. In the next chapter I explore the city of Santo Domingo, with the barrio residents. As the inside turns out, might not the apparent distinctions between the above and below also prove permeable ?

¹⁸⁶ hooks 1994: 211 (feminism: 'just for the joy of it')

CHAPTER THREE: THE CITY

‘The city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls’

Italo Calvino¹⁸⁷

In which I look at the social and economic history of the city's construction from Columbus' foundation to the buildings of the current president. The stories of La Ciénaga are lived and told in the shadow of the wider city, a revered place, yet the city, like the barrio, is a haphazard place, more dream than function.

To understand the barrio, an understanding of the city is necessary: the home and the barrio are interpreted (to some extent created) in relation to the city above the bridge. The previous two chapters have shown the extent to which ideals and aspirations within the barrio are shaped by an image of the city, a sense of how ‘one ought to live’. It is a two way process. The decree of eviction expresses the president's own vision. From his

¹⁸⁷ *Invisible Cities*, 1972/74: 11

perspective too the barrio transgresses the social and spatial norms associated with the modern, progressive (clean) city. Both above and below the bridge the barrio is not seen to be a proper place. And yet, what has also been revealed is the extent to which the norms idealised by the president and residents alike (for example those of the housing and the idealised family discussed in chapter two), are often a mythologised version of how the city above the bridge is lived.

In this chapter I look at the way the city and the barrio are woven together. My exploration takes the form of a journey through the built spaces of Santo Domingo. I consider their construction, the histories they represent and the stories that they tell. I discuss their role in the economy and the political structures they support. Lefebvre noted the general fault with urban analysis, that the city is an obvious presence/absence, yet its physical spaces are never addressed directly (see my introduction). By placing the built space of Santo Domingo at the centre of my analysis I am at once addressing Lefebvre's critique directly and developing my Foucauldian methodology. To take the city's built spaces as a central theme is to cut a new transect through old issues. The change of perspective makes that which has been in the shadow visible and raises new questions about the way both the barrio and the wider city see themselves. The journey of this chapter starts with a visit to the monumental lighthouse in whose shadow the residents live and ends with a boat trip down the river. Both are sites with links to the city's sixteenth century foundations and to its twentieth century development, the historical periods on which I will concentrate in this chapter.

THE MONUMENTAL CITY

'El monumento', *'the monument'*, as the lighthouse, the Faro a Colón, is colloquially known, is much discussed within La Ciénaga. The monumental Faro was built to commemorate the quincentenary of Columbus' invasion of the Dominican Republic (see chapter one). The laser crucifix beamed from the monument onto the night skies looks particularly impressive from the barrio, which is frequently in darkness, as the power cuts continue. Candle stubs are found and in their flickering light the conversations turn not only to comparisons with the cañada, but to wider discussions of the city's construction, the ways in which the barrio residents feel at once caught up with, yet excluded from those places beyond their barrio.

<i>'Nosotros los pobres no gozamos nada del Faro. Ahí cuando hizo el Faro, lo que hizo fué subir el alto costa de la vida para nosotros - "y el costo de la vida sube otra vez" '.</i>	We, the poor, don't enjoy anything of the Faro. What they did there when they built the Faro was to raise the high cost of living we already have - "and, (quoting from a popular song) the cost of living rises once again". (Tití)
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The construction of the lighthouse has not only robbed those who once lived on the site of their homes and land. It is resented more widely for its economic implications: blamed for inflation and specifically for (literally) stealing La Ciénaga's light and much needed investment. The most common reaction is that the lighthouse is at once 'the most beautiful thing here' and a simultaneous acceptance that, as Jaqueline explains, it is '*un atraso por el barrio*', 'a backward step for the barrio'. It is as if what is defined as 'beautiful' is axiomatic with that from which the residents are excluded. Those who live in La Ciénaga feel the city, like the laser crucifix and the bridge, passes over their heads.

As I have stated aspirations, frustrations and interpretations within the barrio are shaped by the very real difficulties of living in La Ciénaga, compounded by a sense that things somehow 'ought to be different'. There is a feeling that there are norms of city living which those who live in La Ciénaga are outside and can never reach. The lighthouse plays an important role in the construction of these feelings. Compared directly with the cañadas, it is the antithesis of that which most clearly defines the barrio as a place where few would want to live. Given the way the lighthouse dominates the skyline, conversations and feelings within La Ciénaga, I, like those who live in the barrio, am curious to explore the construction from closer quarters. As I explain to my companions, I want to see what might happen if we look at the monument from a different angle.

Visiting the monumental Lighthouse

Visiting the monumental lighthouse, the Faro a Colón, becomes an expedition: weeks are spent discussing who will cook, when we should go and who else should be invited.

Yonesa reminds everyone of the *fucú*, the curse of the lighthouse, widely purported to have been responsible for the death of Balaguer's beloved sister Emma, only days before the monument's inauguration. 'Many were killed in the construction but it was hushed up, the workers have been cemented into the walls'; Yonesa regales us with stories,¹⁸⁸ adding to the heightened sense of drama and expectancy which surround the trip. I hire a mini bus and on a Sunday afternoon in April we set off across the city.

We arrive and find the vast site to be deserted; only a couple of American tourists and us. Once the home of thousands of people the area which surrounds the monument is now carefully manicured, a landscaped park with water ponds, grass and trees. There is a sensation of distance created through the landscaping. The city seems somehow to float beneath us on an extenuated horizon and the emptiness is eerie. Unlike the city's other parks, crowded at the weekends with strolling lovers, families and children's birthday parties, this place is still. Tall, sterile trees give no shade and there are no drinking water

¹⁸⁸ Yonesa's story implicitly refers to the grand constructions of earlier eras and to the human sacrifice entailed in the projects of the Pharaohs in particular. Teófilo Carbonell, the final architect of the lighthouse, similarly tries to locate his project within the grand Pharaonic tradition when I interview him. This is another curious, example of the way in which the stories above and below so frequently overlap, but are told with very different intent. For Carbonell, the Pharaonic allusions cement his place in the history of grand construction. Below the bridge, the story is subversive, a critique of the project.

fountains. These absences, immediately noticed by those from La Ciénaga, are read not as oversights, but rather as a design to keep people out.

We skirt the colossal cruciform structure. Eight hundred feet long and one hundred and fifty feet tall, the original British architect, Joseph Gleave, likened his design to ‘a tremendous cross carved in the ground’.¹⁸⁹ The immense scale dwarfs us, creating a sense of awe, while the massive solidity of the walls reminds us at once of the strength and permanence of the state’s power and (at first at least) of the immutable colonial history the lighthouse celebrates. We approach the wide steps which mark the monument’s entrance. The smooth stones on either side are engraved with the words of the pope and Columbus. The latter oddly confesses to the visitor across the centuries, imploring in enormous letters ‘*llore por mi quien tiene caridad, verdad y justicia*’, ‘cry for me you who have charity truth and justice’.

Once inside we are clothed by the monument’s internal streets. Their tall walls and ordered, grid like form (a reference to the grid on which the wider city is based) make us feel that we have entered a forbidden fortress. The monument is, like the cañada, patrolled. White clad marine guards silently, surgically, constantly exchange positions and survey the visitor. With our seventeen children under the age of seven, the little girls in their pink nylon dresses and big bows, we immediately become the spectacle, a source

¹⁸⁹ A description taken from the model and accompanying notes exhibited at the Great London Exhibition of 1946.

of benign amusement for the marine guards and nervous apprehension for our tourist guide.

As we begin to tour the monument, we are looked at and observed while prevented from looking (or touching). The steps around Colombus' tomb with a guard at each corner mean we cannot get close enough to have a proper look. Our guide, who constantly exhorts us not to touch, is himself perceived by my companions as a guard. A monument Margot whispers somewhat indignantly, is 'somewhere you can walk freely'. '*Los gringos andaban solos*', 'the gringos walked on their own' Yonesa retorts and resentment builds. I had barely registered the American tourists' lack of a guide presuming that they had either rejected the offer with the weary ennui common to the global tourist or, that the guides do not speak English.

<i>'Nosotros tenemos una guía porque somos</i>	'We had a guide because we were
<i>pobres...no hay ningún igual - hay una</i>	poor...there is no such thing as equality -
<i>diferencia (sic) - ellos son turistas y son</i>	there is a difference - they are tourists and
<i>turistas valen pero nosotros somos una</i>	as tourists have value but we are like
<i>pata por el suelo y no valemos - hay no,</i>	something you kick on the floor and we're
<i>esto es claro como el agua clara y agua</i>	worthless - oh no, this is as obvious as
<i>sucia.</i>	clean water and dirty water' (Jaqueline)

My companions are aware that even in their best clothes they are 'poor'. They have been made to feel different and the journey inside the monument has become a painful one of exclusion; a reminder of all those other places where they are excluded on the basis of class, colour or the barrio they come from. Jaqueline's anger, expressed once we have returned to La Ciénaga, serves not only to illustrate the sensitive emotions brought to the surface by the visit to the Faro (entering the monument she is made to feel worthless and dirty) but also underlines the different experiences we live inside.

The monument houses a museum, entered through shaded dark doors which convey a tangible sense of mystery. As we start to tour the museum someone remembers Yonesá's stories and giggles nervously. We troop past a collection of tropical Madonnas with white painted faces. They are an appropriate legacy of the dictator Trujillo, who initially conceived of the monument and who, reportedly, spent hours of every day painting his own light brown face white.¹⁹⁰ The country's own colonial history is ignored. Instead, the museum houses an eclectic collection of gifts from all nations, including a letter from the British Queen. '*Tantas cosas raras*'; 'so many odd things', my companions comment, rather bemused. I am struck that the pre colonial Taino Indian history is represented by a picture of smiling natives greeting the Spaniards and one pot so small I miss it the first time round. My companions by contrast are amazed by the Indian artefacts sent (perhaps ironically) by other nations; Brazil, Panama, Ecuador, Guatemala.

¹⁹⁰ Galeano describes Trujillo's 'procedure against the black menace...Trujillo who powders his face several times a day, wants the Dominican Republic white.' (1995; 725)

They talk for weeks afterwards about this discovery that in some countries Indian people still survive.

The visit is not entirely a success. Everyone feels hot and tired and a rather bitter argument breaks out between two of the women. Despite their expectations, everyone just wants to get back to La Ciénaga. As we pile back into the mini bus there is a tangible sense of unease for which Margarita is the first to find a voice: she feels trapped by the story the monument tells.

The discovery that Balaguer has constructed a monument that was planned by Trujillo over thirty years ago leaves Margarita with the feeling that things are literally defined in concrete. The options for resistance seem closed. Thirty six years have elapsed since Trujillo first planned the project; thirty six years she reflects in which there was potentially an opportunity to divert the investment, yet the monument was erected. She concludes that there is a need for ‘realism’, when thinking of her own place and the future possibilities for the barrio. Margot listens and concurs; they had thought this monument would be for their grandchildren, but now she muses sadly, it is apparent to her that they won’t be wanted either.

As I drive, I wonder who is dreaming whose historic dream. It as if the history of the monument’s construction has not only reminded those from La Ciénaga about their immediate feelings of worthlessness, but has also given substance to deeper fears about

Later still and in the weeks that follow, the idea of history becomes something much discussed in La Ciénaga. The experience of visiting the museum; the Indian artefacts and the sight of the purported remains of Columbus provoke conversations about the nature of history, of how it is constructed.

'...no estamos muy empapado de esto - hasta los textos están cambiando la historia - verdad? Los libros no son igual. La historia se mantiene viva.' *'...we are not very steeped in this [history] - even the texts are changing the history - isn't that right ? The books are not the same. History is kept alive.'* (Margarita)

Margarita points out that the monument might have a use: the history it tells cannot be re-written and is thus kept alive. If her remarks at first appear to be supportive of a monument of which she is otherwise critical, they are on another level deeply subversive. In accusing the state of manipulating history and re-writing historical texts,¹⁹¹ Margarita opens up the possibilities of telling alternative stories in which the barrio and those who live there might have a different role.

This deeper questioning of the history Santo Domingo tells about itself, and the 'unjust' location of the barrio within this story, continues to unfold within La Ciénaga. Listening to the often heated discussions, I am reminded of what Barthes has called the 'double movement of architecture'. Barthes was fascinated by the way in which the original dream which inspired a building was eclipsed in the process of its construction. The

¹⁹¹ A textual practice which continues to take place as witnessed for example in the continued state vilification during Balaguer's presidency, of Frank Moya Pons, perhaps the country's most important living historian.

resulting building appears to represent pure ‘technical’ thought and yet, Barthes argued the original dream coexists beneath and within the walls.¹⁹² He drew a parallel with the way in which a building when viewed from afar appears as pure line, yet when viewed from close up is seen to be composed of countless segments, interlinked, crossed, divergent.¹⁹³ Similarly, for the residents of La Ciénaga, to come close to the monument is to see that, just as the construction itself is not composed of pure line, so the historical narrative it contains is partial. Beneath the monolithic exterior lie a number of competing and coexisting stories and ideas. These competing stories, once glimpsed, provide the material to interrogate both the version of the past and the vision of the present that the monument attempts to convey.

Both the past to which the lighthouse refers and the cracks which emerge, the suggestion that there might be many possible readings of the historical and political representations of a building, are central themes of this chapter. It is worth pausing briefly therefore to consider the intended role of the Faro in particular, and monumental constructions more generally, within the city.

¹⁹² Barthes 1956/82: 239

¹⁹³ Barthes 1956/82: 249 de Certeau showed a similar interest in the way the built space contains ‘accumulated times that can be unfolded’ (1974: 108).

The Monument's History

Lefebvre dwelt on the role of the monument which he called 'the poetry of architecture', emphasising the monument's ability both to invite the senses into the interpretation of the city and to affect social relations.¹⁹⁴ He suggested, that 'monumental space offers each member of society an image of that membership, an image of his or her social visage.'¹⁹⁵ The monument in other words is an attempt to construct a sense of belonging, a social vision of the city: the norm. The potential power of the monumental vision to include or exclude has already been touched upon in chapter one. The residents' depiction of their cañadas as vagabond monuments, the inverse of the Faro, expresses their sense of exclusion from the city. I suggest that, in the context of Santo Domingo, the monument (and the wider construction processes of which it is part, which include the decrees of eviction and the bulldozing of the barrios) is an architectural expression of the presidential vision of urban community. This is a community to be constructed above the bridge: a community to which only a few are intended to belong.

It seems to be no accident that the lighthouse is known as *the* monument. The colloquialism is a tacit, sometimes explicit, acceptance that the construction symbolises the (blind) president's vision of the city. It is a personal project: Balaguer's expressed desire to be buried alongside Columbus inside the monument illustrates the extent to which the president saw the construction process as one of building a personal place in

¹⁹⁴ Lefebvre 1974/91: 227

history. Costing an estimated US\$ 250 million¹⁹⁶ and oriented towards the tourism industry, the monument is also symbolic of the extraordinary weight of construction within the political economy. Finally, through completing the work of the dictator Trujillo and celebrating the Hispanic conquest of the island, the lighthouse can be read as a fascinating expression of the way built space has been used to construct a particular national identity. Santo Domingo is to be constructed not as a Caribbean capital, a city which turns outwards to the sea, but as one which turns inwards, looking both spatially and historically at its European origins, its white, colonial heritage.

While Lefebvre lyrically describes the potential of monuments to create just such a consensus, he equally emphasises the contradictions inherent in the process. Construction of the monument (like the construction of the community) unavoidably involves elements of repression: that which does not 'fit' or belong, is excluded, often by violent means. Thus, while the image of the monument is one of permanence and certitude, as Lefebvre reminds us in dramatic language, it is only an image. Negativity and terror threaten to return, anxiety and turmoil inevitably break through; the repressed returns with a vengeance.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Lefebvre 1974/91: 220

¹⁹⁶ Ferguson 1992: 2

¹⁹⁷ Lefebvre 1974/91: 227

In the context of Santo Domingo, Lefebvre's words seem prophetic; they describe a process which has taken place. The construction was preceded by protests which were violently smashed as the bulldozers entered the barrios in a continuing conquest of urban space.¹⁹⁸ It is estimated that two hundred thousand people were made homeless in preparation for the monument's construction. Those who remained were hidden behind the *muro de verguenza*, the 'wall of shame', erected to shield the gaze of the pope and other visiting dignitaries. Temporarily silenced, the protesters returned: the inauguration of the Faro in 1992 was surrounded by violent clashes with the police and armed forces as angry demonstrators were forcibly removed and imprisoned.

While the passionate protesters have gone and those who once inhabited the space have been resettled on Guaricano, the site of the city's main rubbish tip, the monument is still open to subversion. Those who live behind the wall have consistently dumped their garbage and litter in the park, an activity that has been greeted with cries of outrage in the press.¹⁹⁹ Very much like the *cañada*, the monument is under assault from the *basura* [rubbish], and as a result is closely guarded by the marines.

¹⁹⁸ Cela 1992 b; 6. Cela argues that the conquest of space and exclusion of the poor underpins the experience of 'modernity' in the Latin American city drawing an interesting and opposing thread through from the colonial era.

¹⁹⁹ See for example the *Listin Diario* 27.03.96 - from which the following extract was taken (my translation) '...a phenomenon in the immediate area of the Faro a Colón, particularly of the so called the "wall of shame", is that unscrupulous people have begun to throw rubbish in the area of the monument, making the surrounds ugly. It would be a shame if the tourists who visit us take away such a bad impression. The strict vigilance of the police in the surrounding area would not be a bad idea, if the conversion of a pharaonic monument into a pharaonic tip is to be averted.'

The monument introduces the possibility of multiple coexisting interpretations of the city. The Faro is at once an expression of presidential power and a site of political protest. The protests are a reminder of the longer histories behind (sometimes silenced by) the monument's construction, and the ongoing social, political and economic role of such constructions; histories and issues which are spontaneously questioned in the barrio as a result of visiting the monument. In this chapter I want to continue this questioning process uncovering the stories that have been silenced and exposing the elements of fiction within those stories which dominate and are commonly heard unquestioned. To reiterate, the barrio, the home and the identities of those who live there, are shaped in response to an image or story of the city. The possibility that this image and the stories on which it is based are themselves constructs, a form of fabrication, has however been exposed.

In what follows I will tell an alternative and multifaceted story of Santo Domingo. I will focus on the built space of the city and the way it has changed in the sixteenth and twentieth centuries. This is a story of the city's political economy told through its buildings, a method which enables me to explore the independent effects of the built space of the city, in a manner similar to the way in which I approached the built spaces of the barrio. At the same time, I will pay close attention to the way in which the stories about the city are themselves constructed.

This attempt to show the architectural joints in the stories can be seen as an integral part of the archaeological method to which I referred above; unseen layers and new perspectives are uncovered. For example, the associations between the current interpretations of the city and those who are in positions of power above the bridge become clear. So too do the ways in which those who live in the barrio are imprisoned by stories which are inconsistent and sometimes erroneous. The gaps, the discontinuities and possibilities of other interpretations begin to show. It is an unsettling process, for the writer, the reader and for many of those who participated. The final journey down the river, with which this chapter ends, was one which brutally ripped away the possibilities of dissimulation.

SANTO DOMINGO: THE CITY AS CONSTRUCTION SITE

In recent decades the story of Santo Domingo has been one of the city as construction site. The building of bridges and avenues, parks and monuments, has forcibly torn apart old neighbourhoods, razed barrios to the ground and wrenched the focus of the city from the Malecón (the avenue which borders the sea) towards the river Ozama, the colonial heart of the city (and the border of La Ciénaga). It has been a Haussmann²⁰⁰ like change of the city and one which continues. It can seem to those who inhabit the city as if only

²⁰⁰ Baron Haussmann was responsible for the reconstruction of Paris under the Second Empire; the era of the grand city plan, the boulevard and the monument.

the rudimentary scaffolding, the noise of the excavators and the endlessly churning cement mixers have a permanent home.

While the scale of this recent investment in construction may have been unprecedented, the longer twentieth century history of Santo Domingo has been one of repeated and dramatic economic and physical transformations. A city which in 1920 had a population of 30,000, had by the 1990s an estimated population in excess of two million inhabitants, one quarter of the Dominican population.²⁰¹ Territorially, the city which occupied only 1.5 square kilometers in 1945, occupied over 200 square kilometers by 1993.²⁰² As the population increased and the city expanded, construction projects multiplied. With his own constructions, President Balaguer placed himself within a much longer tradition: both completing the planned works of his predecessor, the former dictator Trujillo (1930 - 61) and inserting himself within a colonial narrative; ensuring the culmination of the urban work initiated by Nicolas Ovando (1502 - 09), founder of Santo Domingo (La Isabella as the city was then known), the first 'new world city'.²⁰³ Importantly, these are transformations which, as of the time of writing, show little sign of abating under the newly incumbent President Leonel Fernández.²⁰⁴ It is a project which carries a sense of

²⁰¹ Moya Pons 1994: 212

²⁰² Morel et. al 1993: 47

²⁰³ Moya Pons 1994: 212

²⁰⁴ Leonel Fernández came to power in the 1996 elections. Statistics published by the Dominican central bank show the construction sector to have sustained a growth rate of 19.3 percent during 1997, the fastest growth rate of any sector over the period (Banco Central 1997: 108).

possibility for some and for others, the dark foreboding born of the experience of destruction.

Those who lost their homes in the construction of the lighthouse have not been alone. Forced mobility on a phenomenal scale has preceded the city's reconstruction. In a detailed account of Santo Domingo's evictions Cela estimates that one in five of the city's population have been forcibly moved at least once since 1950. In the last ten years alone, an estimated one in ten of the entire population have been moved to make way for the constructions. Many of these families have already suffered up to four previous evictions and an estimated twenty five thousand families have never been re-housed.²⁰⁵

In her work on the urban landscape Dolores Hayden emphasises the ways in which people's attachments to place are material, social and imaginative.²⁰⁶ As physical land marks are erased and social networks pulverised, collective memories are torn and shared histories are muffled by concrete. The loss of local territory triggers for many a deeper fear that they might ultimately lose completely their right to dwell in the city (the fear of the vagabond to which I referred in previous chapters). This palpable insecurity is spoken

²⁰⁵ Cela 1992: 68. More recently the government has been taken to the International Court of Human Rights over the issue by a number of international organisations.

²⁰⁶ Hayden 1995: 43

of daily in wide tracts of the city and those urban planners and architects who oppose the presidential projects have documented the psychological costs incurred.²⁰⁷

Feelings of insecurity are in turn compounded by the stress of accompanying factors such as the constantly changing employment possibilities and the mobility of health and education services. These must now be born daily without the support of neighbouring friends or family. Emotional insecurity in turn has a further physical impact on the city. This circular relationship can be seen in the deterioration of the city's barrio housing stock over the decades. Cela cites the example of Los Guandules built in an ordered manner in the 1950s when people assumed they would have the right to stay in the barrio with the more chaotic constructions in the barrios established more recently where the *desalojo* is an assumption.²⁰⁸ A lack of stability and confidence has made local building projects and maintenance seem a worthless activity.

If those who live in La Ciénaga feel passed over or excluded from the wider city, this is no accident. The presidential decrees of eviction might be read as the core texts of a vision in which there is no place for the barrio, its haphazard streets, the shifting left over spaces. From the presidential perspective, the barrio interrupts the planned city of the monument and the ordered grid, the city designed by his architects. Spatially, there is no

²⁰⁷ Cristobal Valdez 1987; 15, Morel et al 1993; 4-10.

²⁰⁸ Cela 1992a; 71- 72.

room for the spontaneous curve, or the architectural *agache*, in the Santo Domingo of apartment blocks and rectilinear avenues.

In social terms, as the Dominican architect Morel has argued, a 'monumentalised' Santo Domingo implicitly or explicitly carries with it an idea as to who can be a citizen; 'educated people, with nice habits and a civilised lifestyle'. The city which is constructed is a space that those who live in the barrio are never intended to reach.²⁰⁹ Interestingly, when I interviewed the president's architect, Carbonell, he articulated exactly this position; 'The housing which has been constructed...is not the most adequate for their lifestyle, they are not ready for them'. (my translation). This is an extreme understanding of the way in which the built space might dictate both the acceptable type of citizen and the way the city is lived.

The treatment meted out to another barrio, San Carlos, further exemplifies both the ruthless nature of the urban project and the determination with which it is executed. Celebrated in Santo Domingo as *the* successful example of an 'upgraded barrio', the presidential bulldozers sliced the barrio in half, forcing through the Avenida Quinta Centenario, the expressway named after Columbus' invasion. The possibility of a social or spatial sense of neighbourhood has been eliminated in a process which seems to inscribe violence within the barrio. The senses of those who live there have been assaulted first by the bulldozers and the blasting of dynamite, now by the noise of fast

moving traffic on what has become one of the busiest expressways in the city. There is no space for alternative dreams within the blind president's vision. Indeed, this trespassing of the barrio seems almost to respond to an anxiety that the improved barrio might, if not contained, begin to blur the boundaries of the above and below. If the president feels free to export ideas from above the bridge, he is not prepared to countenance a seepage of ideas in the opposite direction.

This then is a construction process which purposefully cements in some places and divides in others. The effects have been not only social and emotional. Below the bridge there has been a political impact: local political networks have tended to fragment and dislocate as the poorer populations have been forcibly moved or found their protests met with violence. I referred in chapter one to the way in which social movements and community organisations, disillusioned and battered by the experience of protest, have become increasingly diffuse and fragmented.

Above the bridge, the vast expenditure (more than ten percent of gross national product in the last decade alone) has been used to cement a system of clientelist politics into place.²¹⁰ President Balaguer published no national budgets, preferring to keep constant hand written tallies in pocket notebooks right up until 1996.²¹¹ He personally controlled the

²⁰⁹ Morel 1993; 57-58.

²¹⁰ Economist Intelligence Unit 1989: 9

²¹¹ *Hoy* 21.8.96; *Computadora sustituye al lápiz* [Computer substitutes for the pencil]

granting of all government construction contracts, no matter how minimal, to build a large constituency of professionals, merchants, industrialists and blue collar workers.²¹²

Supervision of the works has been the responsibility of up to ten government departments of which the Secretaria de la Presidencia has been the most important. This fragmentation further ensures personal control. Public funds have thus functioned as an effective political weapon to repay personal favours and reward loyalty. Investment in the built space has regulated social relations in the private and public sector throughout the city.²¹³

CONSTRUCTING THE POLITICAL ECONOMY

There has been a close and symbiotic relationship between the changes in the built space²¹⁴ of the city and developments in the political economy. Thus, as monumental construction projects have ruptured the built space of Santo Domingo, changing the city beyond recognition, so these changes both reflect and are bound up with much wider

²¹² Again, following in Trujillo's footsteps; Trujillo controlled 80 percent of the country's industrial production and his enterprises employed 45 percent of the country's economically active population. Moya Pons estimates that 60 percent of Dominican families depended in one way or another on Trujillo directly. His building programmes were an important source of this largesse. Moya Pons 1984: 515, 518.

²¹³ See Lozano (1992) for a more detailed analysis of the way in which construction has regulated social relations. Lozano emphasises that while the state has used construction projects to enforce a system of clientelist relations, the form in which favours have been dispersed has enabled those who are powerful in the new industries of tourism and Export Processing Zones to ensure that the state is not a beneficiary of profits (through the granting of tax free status) thus weakening the state's ability to provide services to the wider city (1992: 218).

ruptures in the macro context of the city's political economy. Transformations in both the structure of production and fiscal management are responses in turn to the wider imperatives of structural adjustment and globalisation.

This relationship (between the built space and the political economy) is one which functions in both directions. As the Dominican economy has grown and changed, so the city has developed and extended. In turn, the city's boundaries and physical transformations have shaped the potential and possibilities for further economic development. This is a further example of the way in which, as I argued in the introduction, it is important to think of the city not only as the stage upon which events take place or the goal which is fought over (Castells' interpretation of the city), but, in addition, as an independent presence or variable, which influences action (a Lefebvrian interpretation).

The twentieth century

Three broad phases can be distinguished in the twentieth century development of the Dominican urban economy. The first phase was closely linked to the sugar economy. High international prices encouraged an early form of industrialisation based on sugar

²¹⁴ While I have tended to use the terms 'city' and 'built space' interchangeably, in this chapter the 'built space' refers directly to the physical boundaries of spaces and buildings, while the term 'city' refers to broader networks; the political processes, the urban economy, social relations and the built space.

processing (1916 - 40).²¹⁵ By the 1930s the processing industries expanded their activities to include other agricultural and fish products, laying the foundation for a second phase of industrialisation based on import substitution and more complex manufacturing (1945 - 61).²¹⁶

This second phase of development was initially successful, fuelled in part by the effective demand of a new urban middle class who had expanded and risen to prominence under the first phase of industrialisation. Between 1968 and 1978 the share of manufacturing in gross national product rose from eight to eighteen percent.²¹⁷ It was however a period of success that ended abruptly at the close of the 1970s. A combination of the poor quality of local goods and the onset of the international oil crisis resulted in a severe deficit in the balance of payments and rising external debts.

During the 1980s an intense, frequently violent process of economic restructuring began, clearing the way for the third, current, phase of Dominican economic history.

Representatives of the IMF were ushered in and a series of agreements were periodically reached and then aborted. The result was acute monetary disequilibrium. Towards the end of the decade the currency was devalued by over two hundred percent in two stages and the prices of certain key commodities such as fuel rose by over one hundred percent.

²¹⁵ Frank Moya Pons 1994: 195

²¹⁶ Lozano 1992: 223

²¹⁷ Lozano 1992: 226

A combination of the highest cumulative inflation rate seen in the country's history (three hundred and sixty four percent) and the 'virtual abandonment' of public sector spending resulted in continual strikes and demonstrations.²¹⁸ These were the years in which barrio organisations channeled their energies towards city wide protest movements with the resulting high body count described in chapter one.

On the streets of Santo Domingo above the bridge and in the callejones below, there was a permanent sense of crisis. Within the offices of the government and the banks, a new economy (the third phase), was relentlessly forged. Public sector industries were downsized or closed and salaries were frozen. Concomitantly and in keeping with the advice of the World Bank, the IMF and other multi-national creditors, the Dominican Republic re-invented itself as a low wage economy, an exporter of services. Tourism and export processing zones (virtually unknown at the start of the 1980s) became the backbone of the new economy, constituting over sixty percent of gross national product by the 1990s.²¹⁹ For those who could no longer find employment in the old industries or the new service sector, the only recourse was a now burgeoning informal sector in which a few made vast and highly publicised profits, but the majority struggled to survive. While the Inter American Development Bank praised the Dominican Republic for its new 'flexible' economy and labour force, local institutions noted with some alarm that the profile of both the economy and those who worked within it had been 'disfigured without

²¹⁸ MEPES 1993: 37, 39, 41

precedent'.²²⁰ This third phase is the economy of the border war to which I referred in my introduction: by 1990 over half of the city's population lived below the poverty line.²²¹

Both the Dominican historian Frank Moya Pons and the sociologist Wilfredo Lozano have documented extensively the ways in which the urban space of Santo Domingo has been marked and appropriated by each of the three phases of economic development. The barrios of the city have played an important, although sometimes silenced, role within the process. During the first phase the clear spatial relationship between the physical shape of the city and the trajectory of industrialisation can be seen in the construction of the so called '*barrios obreros*', the 'workers barrios', such as Villas Agrícolas. Located in the north of the city near the factories, the aptly named barrio was built to house those working in the newly established agro industry. Between 1930 and 1960, as the first phase of industrialisation gave way to the second, the number of industrial workers grew from four thousand to twenty five thousand.²²² Trujillo carefully controlled both the location of these workers and their access to the city. In a continuing expansion to the north, barrios such as Villa Juana and Villa Consuelo provided homes for those employed as labourers within manufacturing, while the barrio of

²¹⁹ Lozano 1992: 230

²²⁰ FUNDAPEC 1991: 1

²²¹ Lozano 1996: 187

²²² Lozano 1992: 234, 226. Moya Pons 1994: 209

Mejoramiento Social (literally the barrio of Social Improvement) was constructed to house drivers.²²³

The wealth created in the flourishing era of manufacturing in the early 1970s propelled the establishment of new middle class neighbourhoods and an expansion of the city to the west: neighbourhoods such as El Millón, Piantini and Naco, where plots were larger and the first apartment buildings were constructed.²²⁴ Less positively, this was also the era when the '*barrios marginados*', the 'marginal barrios', began to mushroom.²²⁵ Trujillo's death in 1961 and the lifting of laws which, since 1953, had controlled population movement and rural urban migration in particular, led to a massive exodus from the countryside. Coinciding with the sustained stagnation of the agrarian sector, this exodus continued through the 1970s. Many of those arriving settled in the 'marginal barrios', unplanned areas without services. La Ciénaga was only one of the barrios that grew in this period.

During the third phase, the economic development has continued to inscribe both the spatial growth and the spirit of the city. In the 1980s the economic pattern of what Lozano has called 'dispersed investment' (that of tourism, export processing zones and services) was accompanied by a parallel form of spatial development in Santo

²²³ Valdez 1987: 4. Lopez Penha records that these early expansions of the city were also sites of violent protest. In 1930 for example those who lived nearby tried to block the extension of the Avenida Mella (Lopez Penha 1992: 23).

²²⁴ Lozano 1994: 3

Domingo.²²⁶ The city began to expand in diverse directions, towards both its northern western and eastern edges. Equally important (and closely related to the informal sector activities of those left outside the new areas of employment), was the new phenomenon of those living in the 'interstices'. Neither 'above', nor 'below', increasing numbers have begun to live in the gaps and folds between and within the middle class neighbourhoods, selling personal services to their wealthy neighbours.²²⁷

In the 1990s the economic and urban re-ordering of the city appear to have become ever more closely connected at the same time as the effects have become, both spatially and socially, increasingly divisive. The presidential programmes of urban re-modelling have left few areas of the city untouched. This has led not only to the physical and emotional dislocation of large numbers of the city residents, to which I referred earlier, but to the increasingly accentuated social divisions within neighbourhoods.²²⁸ The middle classes, many of whom have benefited from the new areas of economic expansion, have become increasingly entrenched within their neighbourhoods, now provided with shopping malls and multiplex cinemas. Constructions designed to serve the tourist industry in particular have at once led to the careful landscaping and beautification of these neighbourhoods and to an increasing crowding of space in the poorer barrios of the capital as homes and often

²²⁵ Moya Pons 1994: 211

²²⁶ Lozano 1992: 265, 308

²²⁷ Lozano 1992: 308

²²⁸ Lozano 1994: 6

entire barrios are erased.²²⁹ For those left outside this third phase of economic development it seems as if the intense occupation of the city mirrors their ever more intense trading activities as they struggle to survive.

competing interpretations

Focusing directly on the homologous relationship between the economy and the built space of the city, Lozano cites the 1950s as the decade of rupture, the point at which Santo Domingo started to *generate* rather than link urban economic and social dynamics.²³⁰ The 1950s was the decade of transition between the first stage of agro industry and the second phase of manufacturing based import substitution. By the close of the decade seventy five percent of industry was concentrated in the capital.²³¹ Importantly, Trujillo, who in 1936 had ‘corrected’ or re-named the city after himself, ‘Ciudad Trujillo’²³², was, by the 1950s at the height of his power. Investing over sixty percent of public expenditure in building works in the capital, he began to develop a vision of the city; a ‘model space; small, modern and clean’, which would at once be the home of and inspiration for the model citizen.²³³ This project of social and architectural construction started with the building of the first bridge, the Puente Duarte, as a result of

²²⁹ Lozano 1992: 317

²³⁰ Lozano contrasts the development of Santo Domingo with that of Santiago, the second largest Dominican city. Santiago has remained an important nodal point of the region, linking and servicing the Cibao agro fishery production, rather than a city which generates economic production. (Lozano 1992: 235)

²³¹ Moya Pons 1994: 209

²³² Galeano 1995: 723

²³³ Moya Pons 1994: 209

which the first *desalojo* [eviction] took place; families were moved from Villa Duarte to Guachupita.²³⁴

I am interested in Lozano's arguments for two reasons. Firstly, they seem to reinforce the importance of thinking about the city as an independent presence which influences action. The lament perhaps should be, not only as in the barrio '*si tuviera calles...*', 'if only there were streets...', but rather, '*si las calles hablarán...*', 'if the streets could speak....'. The economic, social and emotional effects exerted by the built environment are evident. Secondly, Lozano's choice of the 1950s as a decade of rupture contrasts with the story told by the international institutions (the World Bank, the IMF and those scholars working within an international discourse of development), who cite the world oil crisis and the following adjustments of the 1980s as the moment of decisive change. As the two stories unfold the subtle but important differences that are rooted in their chosen starting points become clear. The potential power of the altered historical transect is illustrated: different events are emphasised, common understandings seem less self evident. Margarita's comments on the possible re-writings of history and their implications are brought to mind.

The global narrative takes the 1970s as its point of departure: the era of the debt crisis, spiralling inflation and economic instability in the Dominican Republic and many other countries. There is a closely linked urban story of exponential city growth and socio

²³⁴ Morel et al. 1993: 32

economic crisis, leading to acute urban poverty. The emphasis on common histories implies the possibility of a global remedy: structural adjustment programmes, restrained social expenditure and production which focuses on foreign exchange earnings.²³⁵

The work of Dominican scholars intersects with these global narratives (Lozano's story for example does not exclude an analysis of the importance of the debt crisis of the 1970s), but places different emphases and reveals local complexities. Important amongst these are the continuing impact of a local agrarian crisis and the repeated interventions of outsiders, most dramatically the United States who become long run meddlers as opposed to more recent providers of 'aid'. The political and psychological legacy of Trujillo the dictator is also kept in view. The picture is one of a deep rooted crisis in human development, the result of political and social processes, as opposed to the more recent disequilibrium in fixed capital. Lozano argues that this crisis, one he calls a crisis in human capital, will only be exacerbated by the proposed global remedies.²³⁶

In chapter one, looking at the history and experience of community organisation, I discussed the ways in which, in the barrio, ideas of community are always shaped within a subjective experience of being outside a hierarchical, often violent state. Here I want to suggest that there is a parallel process in play at the city level. A generalised,

²³⁵ See for example the World Bank's agenda for Dominican reform (1995: 23, 31-32) and their Urban Policy Agenda (1991), and the Economic Intelligence Unit who note the success of the IMF agenda, despite the deep recession incurred (1998: 9)

²³⁶ Lozano 1992

international discourse at once transforms and limits the openings for individuals, government officials and the city as a whole.²³⁷ The implications of the stories which are told are not only economic (defining what can be built in concrete), they are emotional and psychological (defining the limits of what seems possible, what might be argued for).

If this argument seems to foreclose options, to echo Margarita's sense of being trapped, given the dominance of the international stories and the apparently immutable power of those above the bridge who reinforce them, this is not the intention. I want rather to emphasise that the stories which are told and the interpretations which are given prominence have profound implications, not only for the barrio, but for the city as a whole. My intention is also to reveal that the dominant stories are only partial. Other stories, with other implications are revealed by an altered perspective, in this case that of an alternative historical transect.

Of equal importance is to illustrate that, to some extent, both national and international stories are pinned on imaginings. Archival sources are difficult to locate, there are no published national budgets, even the size of the city's population is contested. As discussed in the introduction, the 1980 census, finally published in 1997, is widely distrusted not least because the figures for Santo Domingo leave out the barrio of Los Alcarrizos, the largest barrio in the city. It is to these more mythical, imagined elements I

²³⁷ This follows from Escobar's arguments (1992) elaborated in chapter one. Lozano has done some interesting qualitative research within Santo Domingo confirming that, at the city level, personal possibilities and

want to turn next. I want to suggest that, just as there is a symbiotic relationship between the built space of the city and the political economy, so there is an interesting and consonant relationship between the built space of the city and these imagined elements. Unquestioned, they form part of our common understanding of the city and how it came to be. Interrogated, they illustrate both how the stories told and the city constructed might be different.

MYTHICAL FOUNDATIONS

There are two myths which resound and recur through the stories told within and about Santo Domingo, the stories in the shadow of which those who live in La Ciénaga shape their lives. The first relates to the city's colonial history: it tells of an ordered past, the existence of a model that the modern city emulates. The second is closely related and is what I will call the myth of the marginal:²³⁸ the assumption that the stories told about the city are universally applicable, that is, that it is only the smallest minority who have been left outside the construction process. I want to consider both these myths in turn in this last part of the chapter. It is important to remember that, as I look at the stories, I am always holding in mind the concrete questions as to what these stories make possible, in particular what options they leave open for those who live in La Ciénaga.

actions are very much shaped by an interpretation of the dominant story (1997 forthcoming).

Myth, Barthes tells us, is a form of communication; it is about the way a story is told. The function of myth he asserts is to fabulate and distort but, crucially, the number of elements and partial truths the myth contains means both that a number of readings are always possible, and that the stories cannot easily be overturned.²³⁹ Myth then is the narrative equivalent of the monument. It contains a number of stories which are then presented as a fictive, seamless whole or thread. Like the monument, the closer I come to the myths of Santo Domingo, the more I find them replete with fascinating contradictions.

The Sixteenth century Heritage

The urban projects of the twentieth century have continually referred to those of the sixteenth. In turn, both Trujillo and Balaguer have celebrated the city's colonial heritage (the construction of the lighthouse, the restoration of the colonial city) and founded their own power on a particular story of the colonial past (a celebration of white, Hispanic cultural roots, an adherence to the planning principles of the ordered grid). Historical documents however reveal that the foundations on which the presidents have built their visions are far from sturdy.

²³⁸ de Certeau comments that, 'marginality is today no longer limited to minority groups, but is rather massive and pervasive'. (1974/84:xvii)

²³⁹ See in particular Barthes discussion of *Myth Today* in *Mythologies* (1956/93)

The construction of Santo Domingo has from the outset been a troubled process. The indecision of colonial rulers who moved the city from one side of the river banks to the other and successively renamed the site seems in many ways a metaphor for the process which unfolded. Plans for the city including precise measurements of the colonial urban grid were sent from Spain. Execution however proved far from easy: the difficulties of uneven terrain, poor administration and economic crisis meant that much of what was designed was either delayed or poorly executed.²⁴⁰ The walls of the city started in 1516 were not completed until 1631. Records complaining of their defects, such as their uneven height, date from 1541 and continue into the eighteenth century.²⁴¹

As the construction process proceeded, haphazard events and the elements of surprise continued to dominate over the dictates of planning. Within the colonial walled city, the *cañadas* presented the greatest obstacle to the execution of the imposed grid. Where the path of a street was considered to be particularly important such troubles of the terrain were not allowed to stand in the way. The calle Mercedes, one of the central and most important streets in the colonial city, stands over what was once one of the largest *cañadas*. In most cases however the streets which emerged were those spaces left over after the buildings had been erected. In other places poor drainage, the frequent clogging of the *cañadas* with discarded rubbish and the low quality of the works meant that pavements and streets alike frequently collapsed. Numerous stories are documented of

²⁴⁰ López Penha 1992; 48. The section which follows draws broadly on López Penha's history of Santo Domingo, *Por Qué Santo Domingo Es Así*

children whose lives were accidentally lost as a result. The much vaunted aqueducts and sewers, now a tourist attraction and the site of guided walking tours, never delivered an adequate water supply. The search for parts to mend the colonial pumps started in 1505 and continued to 1925.²⁴²

The troubles which the colonial city faced were not only structural, they were also social and economic. Santo Domingo in the sixteenth century was, like the city today, one whose authorities teetered constantly on the brink of bankruptcy. The city was subsidised from its inception by a tax known as '*El Situado*', literally 'the site', raised in Mexico. An early form of foreign aid, the collection of the tax was strictly enforced by the Spanish government who were anxious that their new, strategic city should be inhabited by Spanish citizens as opposed to undesirable Taino Indian natives. Tax revenues were intended to act as an incentive, stemming the flow of reverse or onward migration. Many of those Spaniards posted to or arriving in the city attempted to migrate to other colonial cities on the American continent which appeared to offer more promise. Santo Domingo, again, like the city of today, was a porous city; a place of short terms stays and a place from which to dream of migration.²⁴³

²⁴¹ López Penha 1992: 84

²⁴² López Penha 1992: 44-45, 72-75

²⁴³ López Penha 1992: 49. Moya Pons 1994: 190, 191

A fictive history has been told. To look more closely is to reveal the distortions. The colonial city was not a place of either social or spatial order. As such, while it might provide an interesting parallel with the Santo Domingo of today (provoking us to question with Margot and Margarita as to whether a city can ever escape its history), it does not provide an example of a norm that might be emulated. La Ciénaga is not the antithesis of the colonial city but rather a place that presents very similar challenges. It becomes clear that it is political will as opposed to the limits of topography, engineering or the budget which prevent the construction of streets and the lining and covering of the cañadas.

Furthermore, the colonial city was one to which the majority never belonged. They were either prohibited from entering the city, the case of the cimarrones who lived along the colonial banks of the river, or desperate to escape and return either to Spain or more 'fortunate' areas of the new world such as Mexico. Both patterns have persisted in the modern city and again, the parallels between the colonial administrations and those of Trujillo and Balaguer are striking. The most recent survey found that sixty five percent of Dominicans would like to leave, of whom the majority are actively planning to do so.²⁴⁴ One home in five has at least one family member already resident in the United States.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ Ultima Hora 27.07.92. Moya Pons records that between 1989 and 1990 300 Dominicans were deported from Puerto Rico each month and that 12 percent of the entire Dominican population are resident (legally or illegally) in the United States (1992: 581).

²⁴⁵ Endesa 1991

Simultaneously Balaguer, like Trujillo before him, showed himself to be obsessed with population control, publishing successive decrees of exclusion and eviction.

The Myth of the Marginal

At the time of writing seventy percent of Santo Domingo's population live in areas that are marginal; the *barrios marginados*. That is, the majority of those who live in Santo Domingo today are, like their predecessors, not officially part of the story which is told. This is the myth of the marginal. Those to whom the term is applied are neither numerically nor spatially peripheral. They may be confined to a smaller part of the city (seventy percent of the population occupy less than one fifth of the city's space)²⁴⁶ but many of the 'marginal' barrios, like La Ciénaga, lie at the heart of the city.

What is important is that those who live in barrios such as La Ciénaga *feel* marginal. Internally their barrio is a place without streets, a place where waste, both physical and human, accumulates in the cañadas. Their homes, the denigrated shacks, are places of strife and anxiety. Neither public nor private places are as they 'ought to be', when compared with the city of stories above the bridge.

The bridge seems a metaphor for the current state of Santo Domingo. It appears to separate the planned city from the haphazard barrio; its presence defines the below and

²⁴⁶ Chantada 1996: 27

constructs an inner sense of marginality within those who live beneath. Yet, the bridges, a product of the monumental constructions which have been so important during the second half of the twentieth century, are crumbling; they exemplify the chaos beneath the planning. Above the bridge, traffic and rubbish jam the roads in a manner not dissimilar to the chaos of the *callejón*; pavements and streets alike are cracking.

The Puente Duarte which runs above the heads of those who live in La Ciénaga, once a symbol of Trujillo's modern city, is falling apart, a source of many *barrio* jokes. For the city engineers the structural fissures are a source of embarrassment. They have been forced to make a statement assuring the general public that the bridge is not a public danger and, as a security measure, the police have been deployed to vigilate this 'monument' too, ensuring that heavy lorries are not allowed to cross.²⁴⁷ The bridge thus might be interpreted not as a symbol of the divisions between the above and below, but of a city which is falling apart, a city whose seams were never coherently woven together, whose histories have been distorted.

The bridge and the river bring together elements central to the stories of Santo Domingo. From the bridge, both the *barrio* and the modern triumphs of the city's engineering projects are visible. Below, the river is at once a site of sixteenth century colonial heritage and a key resource in the tourist economy, the foundation of the current third phase of the twentieth century economy. Paradoxically, despite this confluence of elements, the

river has, only recently, become a central theme in the narrative construction of the city. With the exception of the colonial port, these liminal lands (of which La Ciénaga, a place that only ‘appears’ to be land, a place where the river ends and the city begins, is an important site), have been paid little attention.

It is this uncertain, still to be contested nature of the place, the opportunity to watch a story being constructed which fascinate. This is changing: President Balaguer’s final constructions wrenched the focus of the city towards the river, as I have noted above. Current plans to drag the colonial banks of the river (a project in which La Ciénaga would surely disappear) represent an attempt to incorporate the area into the dominant national story: the river banks will be developed as the site of a new tourist complex. These are plans supported by a new and increasingly strong discourse promoted by international organisations and pressure groups, that of protecting the environment: the cleansing of the city is focused on the river.

In the interests of promoting both the city’s development and cleanliness, the authorities above the bridge have started to organise river trips along the Ozama. For me, both the river and these trips are a site of curiosity. The unsettled nature of the elements involved present the possibility of weaving another story. I am also under constant pressure in the barrio to organise another city trip. My companions have never been in a boat and we decide to make the trip down the river.

²⁴⁷ Hoy 11.03.1997

A JOURNEY DOWN THE RIVER

As the boat leaves the colonial port our guide begins to tell us an allegorical story of the river and the city through his tannoy. The cities of antiquity he tells us start at the source of fresh water which then, as the city grows becomes a floating tip, a place of *aguas muertos*, literally waters of death. The water we are moving through is thick and black, like an oil slick, choked with plastic bowls, baths, bottles and bags. The river edges are formed from accreted rubbish: human waste and excrement, dead animals and other less easily identifiable objects which are caught up in the reeds. It is hard to disagree with the story we are being told. The river seems to be a visible and olfactory symbol of a wider urban crisis, just as our guide intends.

Our journey follows the immediate banks of La Ciénaga, past the mounds of gently smoking rubbish and the mouths of the cañadas, which disgorge their contents directly into the river. The barrio looks immense from this vantage point. Innumerable children shout and wave from the banks, unintentionally adding to a vision of appalling density, of claustrophobic horror.

To the north of the barrio, upstream, the unregulated industrial waste which is daily poured into the river is a silent yet far more hazardous problem than that of human settlement. The river Isabela, the tributary of the Ozama, is contaminated by more than twenty food processing factories in the barrios of Villas Agrícolas and Los Alcarizos. Undiluted chemicals poured directly into the river have led to a spectacular carpet of lilies six kilometres long.

Further downstream at La Zurza the effluent of another fifty nine industries joins the river. It should be emphasised that the concentration at these points is not only of effluent but of population; La Zurza and Los Alcarizos are some of the poorest and largest barrios of the city. As the river moves down stream, these and other barrios on the west banks of the river both rely on the river for domestic water use and add their own domestic waste to the industrial discharges. On the east banks the national mills Molinos Dominicanos and the cement works, la Fábrica Dominicana de Cemento, are sited on the river's edge. The limited regulation which in any case is reputedly routinely flouted reaches its symbolic apogee almost opposite La Ciénaga where the cement works which support the presidential building campaigns daily tip their waste into the Ozama.

We never get this far along the river. We never hear either of the way in which the barrio of La Ciénaga inherits the discarded waste of those who live on the higher ground. The cañada Bonavide, the central artery of the barrio, carries the waste of nine of the city's largest barrios through La Ciénaga, on its way to the Ozama. It is a source of many of the

barrio's difficulties. The volume of waste which passes through the barrio is not only unsightly, it is a serious health hazard and the cause of the frequent floods. The complexity of these issues, those objects of desire constantly lost and damaged are, as Margarita points out, subjects elided by our guide.

<i>'...el señor iba indicando lo que veíamos y dice 'a este lado viven las personas de La Ciénaga que son las personas que hechan basura y... basura generalmente, al río y nada los niños estaban ahí diciendo 'bye bye' y esto y ella dice 'debe pasar un ciclón y llevarselo a todos'. Ella los culpa a ellos porque el río está en estas condiciones. Ahora yo no creo que ella debería decir eso pero ella piensa que el gobierno da dinero a esa gente para salir de ahí, o dinero para que se mantengan y no es así. Ella dice 'ojalá que viene un ciclón y se lo lleve todos, todos'. Ella lo repetió varios veces.'</i>	<i>'...the man went on pointing out what we were looking at and he said, "on this side live the people of La Ciénaga who are the people who throw rubbish and...well, rubbish, into the river", and well, the children were there shouting "bye bye" and that and she [a woman from above the bridge standing next to Margarita] said there should be a cyclone to take all of them away". She blamed them for the fact that the river is in this condition. Now I don't think she should say that but she thinks that the government is giving money to everyone so that they can leave the place, or money so they can survive, but its not like that. She said "let's hope a</i>
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cyclone comes and takes them all, them all". She repeated it various times.'

'Ahora yo no sé si tu lo viste cuando el señor nos mostró un drenaje que va ahí al río, pero esa señora no piensa en eso. Va ahí invisible pero va ahí igualmente. Cuando hablaba de la cloaca ella piensa que solamente son esa gente - como te digo las personas marginadas - son las que tiene el río dañado. Nada, yo tuve que quitarme de ahí y no hablar mucho. Yo estaba furiosa. Pero creo que toda la culpa - ella y mucha gente más porque no es solamente ella - sienten igual.

'Now I don't know if you saw when the man pointed out the drains which go into the river but that woman doesn't think about that. It goes in there invisibly, but it goes in there just the same. When she talks about the cloacae she thinks only in terms of the people - how can I put it, the marginal people - it is they who have damaged the river. Well nothing, I had to remove myself from there so as not to talk. I was furious. But I think everyone blames...she and many other people, because it wasn't only her...they all feel the same'.

Ahora hay que hacer algo porque tu sabes que yo vivo en ese barrio pero yo nunca he visto eso de esa manera. Yo no he ido por el río nunca. O sea contigo yo he caminado más que sola. Pues tu ves la distancia que

'Now I know something has to be done because you know I live in that barrio but I have never seen it in that way. I have never been on the river, never. That is, with you, I have walked about more than I have ever

yo vivo de ahí [muy poc]. Yo realmente lo done alone. Because you know the
veo como algo deprimente [el barrio] se distance I live from there [i.e. the river's
debe hacer algo urgente con esas personas edge: actually Margarita lives very close to
pero te digo que no se va poder hacer, the river's edge]. I really see it as
nunca. something very miserable [the barrio].

They ought to do something urgently with
the people but I tell you they are not going
to be able to, ever.'

This rendition of our river trip was recorded on my shady balcony in Gazcue, above the bridge, several weeks after the event. Margarita's gentler tone and words belie her initial reaction. She was so shocked and overcome at the time, by what she had heard and seen, that she could barely speak. In the days that followed, my own nightmares returned and I could only wonder what I had done to Margarita. As she says, she had literally never seen the barrio in this way before. Our accustomed perspectives of the barrio were violated both by our position on the river and in terms of the opinions expressed by our fellow passengers and guide. The possibility of dissimulation was brutally torn away by an alien angle.

Margarita was angered at the way our guide refused to recognise the complexity of the issues. The story he told was simple and, to borrow Lefebvre's terminology, functionally abstract: the barrio's too numerous inhabitants, like the place itself, are the city's

pollutants. I want to suggest that this identification of the barrio as the pollutant is a metonymic manoeuvre which performs a narrative function within the city, similar to the architectural function of the monument. The contradictions and intricate nature of both the barrio and the city's environmental problems are hidden behind a simple and seamless story which presents one particular barrio as the source of the contamination: a place that is a danger to the city and the residents themselves.

By equating this narrative manoeuvre with the monument I want to emphasise both what the guide's story represses and the possibility that those elements, which are temporarily hidden, will, like the problems of the city, re-emerge. (Implicitly, I am also drawing attention once again to the role of stories within the city, a subject I will address in depth in the next chapter). The hidden or repressed elements include the industrial production of waste and the fact that a significant percentage of the waste disgorged from La Ciénaga into the river Ozama is produced in other barrios. Coincidentally, in Lefebvre's discussion of the ways in which issues are evaded in discussions on urbanisation, he uses the example of pollution. The very label of 'pollution' he argues, diverts the issue and masks the contradictions within the city; 'If we ask, *'whose environment?'* or the environment *of what?*', no pertinent answer is forthcoming.'²⁴⁸

Central to this thesis are concrete urban problems: the themes unquiet and persistent which are only temporarily solved, to re-emerge. The guide's story hides the sources of

waste (making an adequate solution difficult to imagine) and ignores issues internal to the barrio. As I will show in chapter six, when I look specifically at the problem of waste within the barrio, many of the residents employ resourceful strategies either to dispose of or recycle the waste and, in some instances, have founded a livelihood based on the existence of the rubbish. It is evident that the bulldozing of the barrio will do little to stop the production of the city's waste. Indeed, it might exacerbate the city's difficulties by erasing strategies currently used for its disposal. The need to ask different questions and expose alternative stories is evident.

Later, as my anger subsided, I recalled the subdued atmosphere of the boat as we returned. The evening's soft colours had done nothing to soothe the violence of the experience. I realised that the response of many of the passengers was one of shock. They too had never been exposed to the sheer enormity of the problem, the scale of the city's poverty, at such close quarters. Their initial comments might themselves be seen as a form of dissimulation. A city which contains such difficulties at its heart is, like the built space of the barrio, more dream (nightmare) than function.

The river trip finally made dissimulation impossible for those who live in La Ciénaga: they had been exposed both to a horrific vision of the barrio and to the fictitious nature of the city that they had literally and metaphorically looked up to. There is nowhere to hide. The river has indeed become a symbol of death as opposed to a source of life, a

²⁴⁸ Lefebvre 1974/91: 326-328

‘wound on the conscience’ of the city.²⁴⁹ Those from above the bridge too have been exposed to the myths on which the modern city has been founded: a system of investment, planning and engineering that doesn’t work.

The stories on which the city bases and sees itself have been called into question. The sixteenth century city cannot be seen as an exemplar of a glorious past, but rather as a place which experienced many problems similar to those experienced by Santo Domingo in the 1990s. The monuments and present day constructions thus refer to a partial history. Furthermore, the modern city is a place inhabited by very few of Santo Domingo’s two million inhabitants. Vast tracts of the city are plagued by problems not dissimilar in type (if slightly lesser in scale) to those experienced by La Ciénaga: structures which crumble, streets strewn with litter and the insecurities associated with economic and social change. To bulldoze the barrio is to evade these much deeper issues about the city of which the disowned infrastructure-less La Cienaga is only part.

I draw two conclusions from the journey of this chapter. Firstly, the below is not an inverse of the above: the city as a whole faces common problems which connect the above and the below. This is a theme to which I will return in chapters five and six. Secondly, the importance of looking beneath the accepted stories, to search for silences and alternative interpretations, is evident. I referred in chapter two to the curious nature of the story telling process: the possibilities stories offer for alternative imaginings. I turn

²⁴⁹ Morel 1996: 186

now to focus on this process in more detail. In the chapter which follows I look at the stories and methods of the barrio's most consummate storyteller: those of María, the witch or server of the voodoo religion. María's spells and chants emphasise the fact that neither the city nor the barrio are the places they first appear and show the potential of barrio stories as a source of ideas, a place from which to re-imagine.

CHAPTER FOUR : STORY TELLING, SHAPE SHIFTING

‘Rather than remaining within the field of a discourse
that upholds its privilege by inverting its content
(speaking of catastrophe and no longer of progress),
one can try another path, one can try another path...’

de Certeau²⁵⁰

Stories of the barrio, the home, the city; these are the stories told within La Ciénaga.

Stories told to entertain, to escape the interminable boredom, to communicate, or just to lessen a little the pain of living in such a place. Stories which take the form of passing gossip, jokes, dreams or, more dangerously, nightmares. The themes, like touchstones, reveal what is important within the barrio : waste: the filth of the cañada, the violence and the tigueraje. The detail illuminates the ways the barrio is lived.

Stories change, circulate and become internalised as time passes. Over the years I have been staying in the barrio, two aspects of these stories and the story telling process have never ceased to fascinate, sometimes to mystify. The first concerns the mobile, changing nature of the stories, the second concerns the inconsistencies and contradictions within them, contradictions often conveyed by silences or gestures more eloquent than anything which is spoken.

Stories move between those who live above and below the bridge, entwining the two together. Above the bridge stories about the violence, dirt and terror of La Ciénaga ensure the legendary status of the barrio within the lore of Santo Domingo. In turn, stories gleaned from the wider city are re-told within the barrio, embroidered with local meaning and relevance. In the process opinions move and attitudes alter. Stories shift again according to where the listener is standing; a reminder too that the role of the listener is never a passive one.

From the beginning of my time in La Ciénaga I was struck by the co-existence of such shifting stories; the priest, the witch, the government health worker move through the same spaces of the cañadas and callejones, dispensing what appears to be impossibly conflicting advice that is equally acceptable to the listener. Some, such as Margot, an active church and COPADEBA leader as well as friend and client of María the witch, not only listen, they actively participate in and seek out these competing narratives. This is the second fascinating aspect of the barrio stories; their inconsistencies and contradictions; their gaps and silences.

How should these stories be understood ? Furthermore, how can they be retold ? The longer I have stayed in the barrio, the more I have become conscious of the difficulty of retelling such stories, of representing them on the written page. I have become

²⁵⁰ de Certeau 1974; 96

increasingly convinced that to flatten out these woven, over-lapping, often hesitant stories, to present them in a linear manner, would be to commit a violence of narrative not dissimilar in nature to the violence of the presidential bulldozers. If they can be heard, it is the bumps and curves of the stories which render the barrio intelligible.

From the beginning, my concern has been how these polyphonic stories which represent the reality of the barrio, to the residents, might translate into policy. In chapter three I began to look at the nature of the storying process in the wider city, uncovering the fictional and mythical elements. In this chapter I concentrate solely on the nature of stories; how they might inform an alternative tool kit.

Stories reveal the 'something else'. Within the multiple and changing positions held (as within the double occupations of space; the cañada which is at once the space of violence and of the children's games, the home which is at once refuge and prison) lies a mental and emotional space of creativity. Stories, I would like to suggest, tell us why projects have not previously worked and suggest alternative imaginings. They also have their limitations. It is for these reasons that in this chapter I try another path, considering *how* these stories are told. What might be revealed by concentrating on the process and method of storying behind the stories which have been told ?

María, the witch, is perhaps the most remarkable and powerful storyteller in the barrio. One time wife, one time prostitute, her stories span the realm of the practical and the

mythological. She is the self proclaimed 'queen of the barrio'; entertainer and healer, she works to 'cleanse' the minds and souls of the barrio residents, the dirt of the barrio itself. In this chapter I concentrate on her stories. They offer a radical, often dizzying, change of perspective: a vantage point which throws the stories of others into sharp relief. Her stories tell of memories and histories that others seem to have forgotten. They emphasise the zozobra: the tensions and anxieties that others prefer to evade. In addition, María recognises the potential power of her stories; the content is not always easy to interpret, yet she makes their purpose explicit. Listening to her it becomes easier to question the nature of barrio stories more generally, to explore what they reveal.

MEETING MARÍA

I first met María in 1993, when I was taken briefly to her house, after dark. Tiny, her skin dark, dry and wrinkled like a tamarind pod, she made a formidable impression. Returning to the barrio in 1996, I very much wanted to get to know her better and Margot agreed to escort me to her home.

We arrive and are ushered into a small, dark, inner room. María has a client, in his twenties who has come from Los Mina on the other side of the river. María herself is 'montada', literally 'mounted', visited by the being of San Miguel. Speaking a strange

Creole mixture of French and Spanish, San Miguel searches for my name; '*Ay Hílar*', *Hílar*'', s/he remembers it and vigorously shakes my arms. San Miguel addresses Margot who has come with me; '*ella única, ella tiene ese punto donde ella consigue ese y en que sitio, que trono?*'. Margot 'translates' into Spanish; 'she, only she, has that 'point' where is it to be found and in what place, what throne?'. When I made my first nocturnal visit three years ago, I took a photograph ('*punto*') of María and her altar. It is this that she asks about; where is it, on what 'throne'.²⁵¹ I feel apprehensive, somewhat overwhelmed, not sure whether she feels in some way robbed by the picture; her tone is fierce. It is insufferably hot and she smells of rum and tobacco, standing very close with a large cigar in her mouth. I am glad to be told to wait in the outer room, which I do for about an hour while she finishes her work.

As my eyes become accustomed to the dim light I see her filthy and bare room; in one corner a pile of old rum bottles and plantain skins, in the other a picture of the 'Barón del Cementario', spirit of humour, the *agache* and death, who I later learn to be one of her *luases* [beings/spirits]. Above the door is a picture of the Virgin Mary and a *sabila* plant, the aloe used to ward off unwanted spirits. The only piece of furniture is a rickety narrow bench, I perch on it and wait. She comes outside as San Miguel leaves her; her eyes roll alarmingly, her body moves with violent and sudden spasms. Slowly she starts to murmur Catholic prayers, she is María, speaking Spanish although one I cannot always

²⁵¹ When I later show this photograph to Maria she doesn't seem to recognise herself. '*Esto soy yo?*', 'Is that me?' she asks. I affirm that it is and María is impressed; '*pero soy bien bellas (sic) y jovencita*', 'but I'm

understand. Margot leaves us with strict and protective instructions that María is to accompany me as far as Paola's (the curer) when we finish. María sits by my side and begins one of her long, melodic speeches, a spontaneous interpretation of the world she inhabits, an introduction to the *luases* for whom she is a medium.

<i>'El vivir mio es una cosa porque yo de lo</i>	'My living is a particular thing because I, I
<i>que vivo es de ser del cielo, de las</i>	live by the being of the skies, the majesties.
<i>majestades. Los demás no viven como yo</i>	The rest do not live as I do because they
<i>porque no saben el contenido de lo que hay,</i>	don't understand the meaning of what there
<i>de lo que va y de lo que viene, no saben</i>	is, of what goes and what is coming, they
<i>nada de eso. En lugar de ir en buenos</i>	know nothing of this. So, instead of going
<i>pasos entonces anulan: en fin que vivimos</i>	with good steps they revoke [things], we
<i>todos iguales pero de comprensividades, no</i>	all live the same, but of comprensivities
<i>hay comprensiones. Haber si me entiende.</i>	(sic), there is no understanding. Let's see if
<i>Por ejemplo yo, yo vivo así pero yo no me</i>	you understand me. For example me, I live
<i>quejo porque Dios es que sabe, porque</i>	this way but I don't complain because God
<i>Dios le entrega, yo tengo que vivir así,</i>	is the one who knows, it is God who
<i>Dios es el único poder, Dios es el cielo, el</i>	delivers and I must live this way. God is
<i>sol. Dios es el todo. Ves; yo vivo así</i>	the only power. You see? I live this way
<i>mientras que Dios quiere, pero mucha</i>	while God wills it but there are many

well pretty and young', she responds.

<i>gente alrededor no se muestra igual, no</i>	people around me who do not show
<i>tenemos corazón. Entre luego, pensando y</i>	themselves to be similar, are without heart.
<i>calculando se saca el cimarrón del mundo.</i>	Between what comes later, thinking and
<i>Porque el cimarrón se siente en un palo</i>	reckoning we take the <i>cimarrón</i> ²⁵² out of
<i>para que nadie lo atrape. Pero con la</i>	the world. Because the <i>cimarrón</i> sits on a
<i>buena comprensión y la tranquilidad se</i>	pole so that no one can catch him. But
<i>sale y todo va en paz porque me gusta tener</i>	with understanding and tranquillity all can
<i>todo en paz. Si por ejemplo yo le hubiera</i>	be revealed and can go in peace because I
<i>salida con una perrería en la noche que</i>	like to hold all things in peace. For example
<i>usted vino con el muchacho, hijo de Noña,</i>	if I had played a gross trick on you, that
<i>quien le trajo aquí, si le voy a tener</i>	night you came with that youth, the son of
<i>desconfianza, no estamos en nada. Pero yo</i>	Noña who brought you here, if I had not
<i>no, yo soy hija de Belié Belcán.</i>	trusted you, we would be nowhere. But
	not I, I am the daughter of Belié Belcán. ²⁵³

²⁵² 'Cimarrón' is the name given to the first free blacks who in oral history are reputed to have lived first along the banks of the Ozama and later in the mountains of the interior. Reference to the *cimarrón* or *cimarrónaje* in popular speech carries the connotation of something wild, untamed. Here the use carries a powerful sense of historical lineage, another way of living, of something free.

²⁵³ Belié Belcán / San Miguel is Maria's central '*luá*', that is the being (ser) or spirit for which she is a medium. A famous *luá* in the Dominican pantheon, Belié Belcán is considered to be an angel and in the voodoo tradition of earth, air, fire and water belongs to the division of air and to the family of the *radá*. The *radá* are generally considered to be the gentle, more benign *luases*. The other group, the *petró* have a tendency towards violence. See Rosenberg 1979; 72-73.

Belié Belcán is represented by the colour red and is known to like tobacco and rum. Sometimes described as a *luá* little prone to forethought with bloodthirsty instincts who walks always with a machete and knife, other accounts talk of a deity who, while capable of terrible anger, is a lover of wisdom and diplomacy. See Deive 1988: 174-184. This movement between good and evil by the same *luá* is not untypical, they occupy a space beyond this dualism.

Other atemporal *luases* to whom Maria makes reference are Candelo, a deity of dance and love and the Barón del Cementario (Lord of the Cementary) who is able to purge sins. The Barón del Cementario belongs to the more violent *petró* division of *luases*. Both Candelo and el Barón del Cementario are widely known in Santo Domingo.

<i>Yo ando haciendo una misión caminando</i>	I walk with my traveling mission, this and
<i>esto y esto y esto pero que yo estoy</i>	this and this, but what I am doing is re
<i>haciendo recogimiento de la gente para ver</i>	collecting (sic) the people who can be
<i>si es que puede ayudar los que no pueden</i>	helped, those that cannot accompany us.
<i>acompañarnos, ayudar es una cosa, es</i>	To help is a thing, to provide company, I,
<i>hecharle compañía eo (sic), esa soy yo, yo</i>	this is me, I provide company. They come
<i>le hago compañía. Se ven donde mi y se</i>	to me and they sit down and from the
<i>sientan, desde que me ven se alebrecan. Yo</i>	moment they see me they are cheerful.
<i>sola, yo sola, yo sola, yo sola, yo sola.</i>	Only I, only I, only I, only I, only I. To
<i>Buscarme es una cosa, una necesidad, de</i>	look for me is a thing, a need for that man,
<i>ese hombre, de San Miguel, mucha bulla</i>	for San Miguel. Much noise (making
<i>(haciendo ruidos), mucha alegría, mucho</i>	noises), much joy, much of this (long series
<i>d'esto (una serie de ruidos seguidos por</i>	of noises, strange words and sounds). But
<i>palabras inventadas, no interpretables).</i>	San Miguel is now content and so I too feel
<i>Pero San Miguel ahora está contento,</i>	good because I have told you I live alone
<i>entonces yo me siento bien porque yo</i>	but I live always full of people. ²⁵⁴ I am
<i>dizque (sic) vivo sola pero yo siempre vivo</i>	visited from across the world; from San
<i>llena de gente. Me visitan mucha gente</i>	Juan de la Maguana, Salcedo, El Seybo ²⁵⁵ .

²⁵⁴ It is common for mediums to be in constant communication with their beings or spirits in the voodoo tradition, to be talking to them, obliging them with music, songs and food, even during the moments when their bodies and minds are not 'mounted' ie. completely at the service of the beings. See Rosenberg 1979: 71.

²⁵⁵ These places and those that follow are all within the Dominican Republic, to the West, the border with Haiti, the East, the North and South, other barrios within the city.

<i>mundialmente, de San Juan de la Maguana,</i>	They come from Hato Mayor. They come
<i>de Salcedo, El Seybo, Hato Mayor me</i>	from San Cristobal, Azua, they visit me
<i>visitan. Me visitan de San Cristobal, de</i>	from all parts, they visit me from Los Tres
<i>Azua, me visitan de todas partes, me visitan</i>	Brazos. Look they visit me from Las
<i>de los Tres Brazos. Mire me visitan de las</i>	Matas de Farfan, San Juan. I, the only
<i>Matas de Farfan, San Juan. Yo lo único</i>	thing I have is that I am poor. But,
<i>que tengo es que soy pobre. En fin</i>	throughout the world I am busy with
<i>mundialmente ocupada de la redención. Los</i>	redemption. The four cardinal points know
<i>cuatro puntos cardinales tiene</i>	of my happiness, of my powers although I
<i>reconocimiento de mi felicidad, de los</i>	have nothing, look at the way I live.'
<i>poderes míos aunque yo no tenga, mire</i>	
<i>como yo vivo. '</i>	

María invents words, she is both man (San Miguel) and woman. She mixes practical advice on husbands and relationships with musings on the former dictator Trujillo. She rails against the increasing problems of the barrio: the tigueraje and the basura, and she opposes the order of those above the bridge: the church and the state. Often, it seems, she opposes psychological order too. There are many in the barrio who see her as crazy and my friends above the bridge, who listen to our recorded conversations, think she is mad. Yet María has the power to form communities on a number of levels. Her festivals take place: on the appointed days giant rice puddings bubble in cauldron-like pots and the rhythmic drumming of the *palos* starts. Unlike Freddy and Fautina, María never worries

about people not turning up at the last moment. On a daily basis she is fed by her neighbours and she provides a philosophy of advice to which many turn in and outside the barrio. Unlike anyone else in La Ciénaga María declares herself to be happy.

'A mí nadie me clava hondo.

'Nobody can harm me deeply.

Es facil ?

Do you think it would be easy?

Soy hija del siete Candelo,

I'm the daughter of the seven Candelo,

de la Reina del Sol.

the Queen of the Sun.

Soy hija de la Diosa del Mar.

I'm the daughter of the Goddess of the Sea.

Nadie me tumba.'

Nobody can displace me.'

Laughing gleefully, María celebrates her own freedom and happiness. She fits me into her framework of reference in a magical sort of way (convinced at first that I am from Cuba, later that I have come from the 'King' of England) and that she is to teach me her spells. She rationalises my questions as a quest for power; *'si usted está estudiando algo sobre eso, usted, en la mañana, en el futuro, usted quiere dominar el mundo, el mal...yo soy la que tiene que dar la diestra...'*. 'if you are studying something about this, you, in the tomorrow, in the future, you want to have dominion over the world, the evil... I am the one who has to give you the skills...'.

I tell her rather more prosaically that I want a cure for my broken heart. With a loaded look she tells me that she has a remedy, but that I have a lot to learn. She has more

important things to teach me and she begins to instruct what I should write down and when; '*mirame y escribe lo que digo*', 'look at me and write down what I tell you.'. I start to take notes and over time acquire a bruised upper arm as she drives home her most important points with a hefty thump and a resounding spit on the floor.

STORYTELLING: CONTENT AND PURPOSE

As I listen to María it is the content of her stories which strikes me initially: her stories discuss subjects which others in the barrio seem to be unaware of (the role of history,²⁵⁶ myth and memory), or determined to elide (the subjects of anxiety, the dream or the nightmare). To converse with María on these subjects is to tread a dizzying path between flights of poetic mysticism and abruptly grounded realism. Her stories are disconcerting and disorienting. Of course, this is part of their purpose but it takes me longer to see the purpose of María's stories: the methods by which they are constructed and strategically deployed.

In this section I start with the first area of content; memory, myth and history. I consider how María constructs and uses these stories, before moving on to the second area of content; stories about anxiety; the zozobra. This second set of stories brings together issues that are particular to the barrio. The stories tackle issues of the built space and the emotions, but in such a way that previous understandings are violently disordered.

memory, myth and history

As I have stated, it is the content of María's stories which seizes my attention, in particular her spoken sense of time and the past. Myth, memory and fragmentary historical detail are woven together in a crazed verbal collage. The effect is startling not least because the lack of such elements in other barrio stories becomes by comparison a loud absence. Memory: the power and willingness to recall earlier events is at once a strange and useful tool in the context of La Ciénaga.

When I first stayed in the barrio in 1993, I had tried unsuccessfully to construct time lines with many of the barrio residents. I had picked events such as hurricane David and the April Revolution of 1965, that I knew the barrio residents had been affected by. All of those involved however were unwilling, unable or uninterested in remembering and reminiscing. By contrast, many of María's stories seem founded on a remarkable memory. When I returned to La Ciénaga in 1996 after a three year absence, she was the only person who could remember my name (which is difficult to pronounce in Spanish). I was present when Margot recounted the story of my initial re-encounter with María to Margarita. Margot explained in detail how María had remembered not only my name, but who had brought me to her house and that I had taken a photograph. Margarita was

²⁵⁶ Not something discussed by the barrio residents *before* our visit to the monument (see chapter three)

impressed and later we often returned to the story, amused, puzzled and more than a little in awe at María's powers. Above the bridge, when I recounted the story to friends, many were rather more dismissive: of course she knew they tell me, it is her business to know, she has her spies and informers. I don't know whether María remembered or was informed, whether her methods owe more to memory or to magic. I do know that the effect is the same. María knows who I am and who I know: she is in charge.²⁵⁷

María draws not only on her memory, but also on buried and silenced histories: those of slavery and the colonial past and the more recent (but largely unspoken) military tyrannies. Her rendition of events is partly factual, partly mythical invention. She makes continual references to her *batey* (the work camps surrounding the sugar plantations) and to her ancestors, the *cimarrones*. These are the histories in which (as discussed in chapter three), the other barrio residents are 'not very steeped'. They are also the histories which have been erased in the constructions and fabrications of the wider city. María's references to these communities who first inhabited the banks of the river Ozama contravene the more abstract stories told above the bridge by both national planners and international organisations. La Ciénaga is no longer a generic third world slum, it is a particular place with a local and rebellious history.

²⁵⁷ My own memory is one of the characteristics which most marks me as 'other' within the barrio. My ability to keep track of past conversations and in particular to remember the names of those I meet, is constantly commented on and can make people either wary or admiring. I have neither spies nor magic available, but I do have my own techniques, constantly transcribing my recordings and checking my notes.

On another occasion María regales me with a very personal account of the country's more recent military history, linking herself to the General Enrique Pérez y Pérez, one of Dominican Republic's most feared and hated characters;

<i>Mira bien, el tío mio que fué General de las</i>	Look and take note, my uncle who was the
<i>Fuerzas Armadas, mi tío Enrique Pérez y</i>	General of the Armed Forces, my uncle
<i>Pérez, fué el mayor general de toda las</i>	Enrique Pérez y Pérez, was the major
<i>fuerzas armadas, después luego Secretario</i>	general of all the armed forces, then later
<i>General de la fuerza divisional de los</i>	Secretary General of the armed forces
<i>jueces, después guarda espalda del</i>	division of justice, then the body guard of
<i>Presidente Dr. Joaquín Balaguer. En fin es</i>	the President Dr. Joaquín Balaguer. So
<i>que yo tengo familia de parte y parte en esa</i>	you see its that I have got family in part
<i>leyenda.</i>	and part of that legend.

In 1973 Pérez y Pérez shot Caamaño the hero of the April Revolution, the civil war of 1965. As head of the armed forces and secretary general of the judiciary he is additionally held responsible for the execution of many of those on the left and the tyranny of the 1970s, including the creation of La Banda. These are the years of blood referred to in chapter one during which the residents of La Ciénaga were among those who were tyrannised and who disappeared. In the mid 1980s Balaguer re-appointed Pérez y Pérez and his contemporaries to positions of power for varying periods. Shortly after this conversation took place with María, in the run up to the 1996 presidential elections,

Balaguer shocked the nation by once again appointing Pérez y Pérez to high office as Secretary to the Presidency. This last appointment was short-lived after the government of the United States exerted diplomatic pressure.

The truth of María's rather amazing claim to be linked to such a powerful and current political figure is hard to determine. In a small island it is always possible. There are others in the barrio who claim to have powerful family members above the bridge and in a previous conversation María had told me that she comes from Duvergé on the border with Haiti, a place very close to Vengan a Ver, the birthplace of Pérez y Pérez. On the other hand, Deive in his study of voodoo and magic in Santo Domingo, notes that there is a relatively widespread custom of choosing a *luá* who is a prominent person, either a religious leader, military chief or guerrilla leader, someone who is *not* a relative.²⁵⁸

Increasingly what I come to see, is that the truth or not of María's claims is irrelevant. María's purpose is not to establish a coherent alternative history or story. Consider for a moment the *way* in which María tells the story about her uncle. She gives plenty of historically correct detail. At the same time she closes on a more elusive note. The two elements in María's story which could be factually supported, the existence of both Pérez y Pérez and a particularly violent chapter in Dominican history, are referred to as a 'legend'. It is almost as if María wants me, her listener, to believe her story is mythical

²⁵⁸ Deive 1988: 170

or, alternatively, that she herself draws no distinction between ‘legend’ and what I might see as historically correct detail.

What then is the purpose of María’s stories and in particular her use of ‘history’ ? I suggest that her stories have strategic purpose. Grounding herself in the details of local and personal history, using whatever tools she finds to hand, María is able both to establish her own authority within the barrio, and to compete with and unpick the partial histories and interpretations used so effectively by the planners and presidents above the bridge.

Within the barrio María is fearless. As she proudly asserts ‘...*los tigueres conmigo no se meten, saben que yo tengo familia en parte y parte*’, ‘the tiguerees don’t interfere with me, they know I have family in “part and part”’. The ‘part and part’ to which María refers might be the above and below connections to Pérez y Pérez or her claims to have connections to previous and other spiritual worlds. Once again, the details are unimportant. Within La Ciénaga, the knowledge of her connections gives María a voice of authority and ensures that she is protected.

Within the city María does not feel excluded. Talking about either her ancestor the cimarrón who sits on a pole or her uncle the head of the armed forces, María positions herself in such a way that she has a place in the city’s history, a place from which she can talk back. María, the person who is both the disreputable figure who lives in poverty

below the bridge and the niece of the model citizen, ruptures the divisions between the above and below. Her references to the earlier histories of slavery serve to expose the silences within the city's history as it is currently told and to further undermine the foundations of current hierarchies. María is 'in communication' with the Taino Indian leaders Enriquillo, Caonabo and Anacaona and, as she tells me, 'one can litigate with that'.

María's conviction that the apparently seamless stories told above the bridge are vulnerable to this particular form of local, spasmodic, criticism, resonates with the central themes of Foucault's writing. His writings, which have influenced my own approach to the barrio, make me alert to the purpose of María's stories in a way I might not otherwise have been. There is an analogy between Foucault's project, which he describes as 'the insurrection of subjugated knowledges', and María's methods.²⁵⁹ By subjugated knowledge, Foucault refers to two things. He refers to historical details which have been either buried or disguised through their incorporation in a seemingly coherent story. He also refers to something related but rather different: those knowledges which have somehow been disqualified as either delinquent or inadequate, knowledges which are in Foucault's words 'located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity'.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ I am drawing here on the description Foucault gave of his own work in the Two Lectures (1976/80). Foucault describes in the lectures the tools which are central to the wider series of his researches, works which have influenced my own methods and approach (as described in my introduction).

²⁶⁰ Foucault 1976/80: 82

The recovery of historical fragments and local memories, and their merging with other information and knowledge, was given the term genealogy by Foucault. Foucault's concept of genealogy is closely related to and developed from his earlier writings on the archaeological approach, which I described in my introduction. He writes, 'Let us give the term *genealogy* to the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today.'²⁶¹ I will return to the potential practical uses of this archaeological / genealogical approach in the chapters which follow. Here I want to emphasise the latter part of Foucault's explanation; the way in which subjugated knowledges of the past can be used in the present. Foucault, like María, emphasises that the stories told 'above the bridge' only appear to be seamless. As such they are unstable, vulnerable to attack by knowledges which they themselves have discounted. Myth, memory and 'erudite' history combine to make criticism possible and potent.

Of course María is not the only person in the barrio who is critical of the authorities above the bridge. In chapter one I discussed the way in which Amparo and her neighbours recognise the need to speak out if they are to change the status of the barrio. Yet, at the same time that the need to be '*voceros*', 'spokespersons', is recognised, the women lament that those above the bridge neither 'see nor hear' their protests. María by contrast suffers from none of these qualms; she is convinced of the efficacy of her own

criticism. She establishes her position and, as I will illustrate below, competes on an external stage, criticising the most powerful authorities in the city. I am intrigued by her fearlessness and curious as to how she weaves her own stories.

Unconcerned as to who is listening, María (unlike other barrio residents) does not try to oppose the dominant story by engaging directly in debate. Her approach is rather to tell another story, producing buried evidence and local detail to construct a very particular attack. Two factors are central to María's success. Firstly, her incorporation of disparate elements is a continual process. She constantly alters her stories and changes her points of reference as appropriate. Indeed, the flexible way in which she incorporated and used different threads within one conversation showed powers of memory and concentration at which, when I got over my initial disorientation, I marveled. Secondly, María's ability to include even the most alien of elements is important.

María's treatment of me is a tangible example of her approach. I observed the way in which her inclusion of me within her exposition could be interpreted as an assertion of power, an example of the domination to which she frequently refers. Rather than showing suspicion (as some of those from COPADEBA did on my arrival), she at once incorporated me into her story and vision. By making me her pupil I am included in a subordinate position within her hierarchies. In the meantime, my foreign presence at her festivals is used to drive home the point to those who come from other barrios, that

²⁶¹ Foucault 1976/80: 83

María is known '*mundialmente*', 'throughout the world'. Indeed, they are suitably impressed and her stature is once again assured.

While María's particular skill and the knowledges she uses are unique, her approach is not entirely dissimilar to that practised above the bridge. I have shown in chapter three how, at the national level, Balaguer has constructed a deceptively coherent story about the city of Santo Domingo based on convenient omissions and, where necessary, the violent obliteration of alternative visions. Indeed, it is precisely the selective nature of the resulting story and the extent to which the stories told by these authorities are partial or fictitious, which makes them vulnerable to María's criticism.

The way in which María ensures that her own partial stories cannot in turn be opened to similar attack is masterful. An illuminating parallel can be drawn here between María's approach and that of the World Bank, author of some of the 'development stories' which I have shown in chapter one, with reference to Escobar, imprison the sense of opportunity of barrio residents. Robert Wade has tracked the silent changes in the World Development Reports (the document which annually sets out the institution's agenda for world development). He reveals the ways in which dissonant voices and evidence are continually re-incorporated in order to shore up the official story: the 'art of paradigm

maintenance'.²⁶² The way in which the World Bank has begun to emphasise community and participative development (see chapter one) is a further example pertinent to the barrio. Challenges and tensions are never explicitly acknowledged. They are silently incorporated and modified. The institution (whether it is María or the World Bank) remains unscathed.

María weaves together disparate elements from stories told above and below the bridge, always from her perspective below. She does not simply negate or nullify the stories of others, rather she creates new interpretations. (I would suggest that the process as practised by the World Bank is one of nullification, a further example of what Lefebvre has called the violence of abstraction in narrative form, as discussed in chapter three.) The effect at first is often that of an impenetrable riddle. Gradually it becomes clear however that María has a unique understanding of the ways in which the above and below are entangled. She can use this understanding to create stories and interpretations which resonate within the barrio. María's attack on the church and the state, neither of whom 'convince' her, is illustrative of both the similarities and the differences in her stories.

²⁶² Wade's explicit concern is the Japanese challenge to the free market model. His detailed argument however exposes the World Bank's 'rhetorical techniques', the tools with which paradigm protection is ensured. Wade 1996

María's critique of the church encompasses the local Jesuit priests²⁶³ and centres on those things that they cannot 'see' or understand. Her raging rhetoric moves from '*esas bairas de hojās*', 'that stuff about leaves', a disparaging reference to her own spells, to the 'bigger things'. María accuses the priests of hypocrisy in their refusal to 'see' the full extent of the violence which surrounds them. They ignore the sons who are enemies of their mothers. It is a critique which, like Amparo's, concentrates on those things which are not seen or understood. The examples she uses however are less common: the reference to her spells and the particular example of violence are specific to the local difficulties of the barrio. (The incidents of sons attacking their mothers are rarely spoken of, but symbolise for many the barrio's ultimate social breakdown.) The way these odd elements are juxtaposed illustrates a way of looking that would be alien to those above the bridge. By using what is marginal within the dominant stories María is able to counter or parry their narrative.

María's ebullient critique of the state works on similar principles. Her stories start locally. María has an elaborate and dismissive analysis of each of the political parties and the way in which their external politics and machinations fuel the rumours and tensions of the barrio, bringing only grief. This critique appears at first to recount yet more details of the effects of state violence as they are experienced within La Ciénaga. Then, gradually, a

²⁶³ María tells me she visits many churches, chanting a long list, but that she 'belongs' to Domingo Savio, the local Jesuit church. It is of course essential for voodoo 'servers' to be communicants within the Catholic church.

different, impassioned pace gathers as she spins together references to what is seen and known, to local order and other worldly orders.

Referring to a *velorio* (one of the almost daily wakes) where María had seen me some days earlier, she tells me that her own heart was full of tears. It was a terrible wake. I had been overcome by feelings of suffocation as more and more people stooped under the door, crowding into the tiny hut, pressing close in on Francisco's hacked and mutilated body lying in its narrow, cheap, wooden coffin. His mother's curdling screams and wails of despair were chilling. Francisco was reputedly killed in a machete attack by El Gambao, a notorious barrio gang leader. María refers scathingly both to El Gambao and 'those people' more casually engaged in the *tigueraje* of the barrio. The frank way in which she names the protagonist, criticising both his behaviour and that of those who work with him is unusual. More interesting is her assertion that the law 'doesn't know anything about this':

'Los consejos míos son, mire, si ustedes piensan que caminando con esa compañía 'My advice is, look, if you think that you are going to walk with that company [El Gambao] *se le va bien, a mi no me parece que va bien, a mi me parece que la compañía le hace mala. Me parece que la justicia no reconoce punto de nadie a nadie.* Gambao] and it will be fine, well to me it doesn't look as if it will be fine, it seems to me that the company will do harm. It seems to me that the law doesn't

Me miran pero yo soy vieja pero no soy acknowledge one person from another.
pendeja. La justicia no reconoce nada They look at me but I'm old, I'm old but
d'eso. ' I'm not an asshole. The law doesn't know
anything about this.'

This extract, like María's tangled talking in general, is hard to interpret. Nonetheless, to listen over time is to divine a very particular critique. María is emphasising the points made by others in the barrio: the police, the army and the legal system are generally accused of punishing and focusing on those who are innocent. Her critique however is different and amounts to more than a demand for a better service. It is not only that a crime has been committed, it is that a moral order, a wider social balance, has been transgressed. Francisco's death is the symptom of a deeper disorder.

While María sees the escalation of fear and violence as beyond understanding emotionally (the cause of the tears in her heart), she can clearly see and analyse the wider social and political context which gives rise to the *tigueraje*. The organisation of violence below the bridge is seen by María as a response to the organisation of violence on the part of the state. Her accusation that the activities of the state and the *tigueres* are 'the two sides of the same coin', supports my own analysis in chapter one of the communities of violence. This explicit acknowledgment that both the violent elements and the formation of behaviour are closely linked and co-determined above and below the bridge is rare.

Secondly, and related to María's sense of a moral order and balance, she directly attributes (although she does not exonerate) the activities of the tigueros to the economic policies of the state. Like the historians and sociologists above the bridge (see chapter three), María emphasises the negative psychological impact that uncertain incomes and employment possibilities have on the young of the barrio; '*...lo que pasa en este símbolo de aquí es que la mayoría de la juventud ha tirado a un dispersamiento*', '*...what is happening in this symbol of here is that the majority of the young have been thrown into a [situation of] break up*'. Again, it is important to emphasise that while there are many in the barrio who blame the violence on the limited possibilities of employment, there are few who incorporate and discuss directly the effects and implications of the accompanying anxiety and uncertainty.

María's analysis brings the border war home. Her stories illustrate and draw together the fundamental socio economic changes described by Haraway and referred to in my introduction: changes in the territories of production, reproduction and the imagination. Within María's stories we see both an understanding of the relational nature of these changes (the way in which for example changing employment opportunities impact on domestic violence within the barrio) and an emphasis on change itself (a source of constant anxiety). The continuing pace and effects of this change reach into areas not previously touched or seen by the policy makers.

María constantly points out what those above the bridge cannot see. Implicit within María's stories is the redundancy of the tool kit used by those above the bridge: hence her need to provide different interpretations and draw in diverse and previously silent elements. The effects and anxieties which emerge within the barrio cannot be located within the old 'maps' or frameworks of reference, neither can they be addressed by the tool kits and approaches of which these frameworks are part. In the introduction I hypothesised that the failure to recognise the importance of new concerns, their links and constant mobility, limits the current search for new approaches to social policy. What I find fascinating about María's stories is both their emphasis on issues not seen within the vision of the policy maker (what I have characterised as the nineteenth century vision), and her conviction that she can interpret and address these alternative issues.

In the next section I turn to the stories María tells about anxieties, dreams and nightmares. Many of these stories turn on the relationship between the built space of the barrio and the emotions of those who live here. In looking at this second set of stories, I am questioning how María's stories address these issues unseen by the policy makers. I am also asking what new approaches to the concrete problems of the barrio María might provide us with.

the zozobra: dreams, anxieties, nightmares

‘de la zozobra, mucha zozobra si...’

‘of the zozobra, so much zozobra yes...’²⁶⁴

María seems to understand not just what her barrio suffers externally, in terms of the difficulties related to the violent space, but what those who live there suffer internally, and the ways in which the two are connected. In María’s stories, the zozobra threads together elements of politics and violence with those of rumour, sexual tension and existential nightmare. The way in which these elements are woven together and the way in which María speaks forthrightly about subjects others dare mention only obliquely, makes her stories compelling.

Recurring constantly like a reprise, stories of the zozobra have parallels with those told by other residents about the cañada. The cañada is of course both the site and the source of much of the zozobra. Both themes fuse the difficulties of the built space with those of violence and inner anxiety. Furthermore, María anthropomorphises the zozobra who ‘visit’ her in much the same way as other residents describe the visitations of the cañada.

As the theme of the zozobra repeats and recurs in María’s stories I am once again disconcerted by the way in which the different elements are woven together. ‘They want to control you, this is what is called a nightmare’, she tells me. I listen, confused, never

²⁶⁴ the zozobra means not only anxiety and worry, but literally, to overturn [OSD]

quite sure whether she is referring to the tyranny of the tigueraje, the tyranny of dreams, or that of the wild spirits with whom she is in communication;

‘Espíritus ambulantes, los quedan silvestre, estar silvestre no están concentrados en ninguna parte y luego molestan.’ ‘Walking spirits, they stay wild, and being wild, are not concentrated in any place, and then they start to make trouble.’

‘They’ are scarcely differentiated and, as María segues from one to the other, her subject matter often seems as dis-located as the wild spirits to whom she refers. Again, as I slowly become accustomed to María’s methods, I realise that the power of her narrative lies in the fact that these distinctions (just like those between historical ‘truth’ and legend) don’t matter. This approach is not without its own difficulties, as I will discuss in more detail below. It does however open up new ways of seeing La Ciénaga: a barrio where these elements are closely related and do interact on one another. María provides an ‘explanation’ for at least one incident that people had earlier refused to talk about.

The zozobra, subjects that others scarcely dare mention, are discussed in more detail by María and given different interpretations. María talks explicitly about the violence of the barrio (for example the naming of El Gambao) and the inner violence suffered by the residents: the nightmare. Nightmares are rooted in and expose the tensions and daily difficulties of living in La Ciénaga. María closely relates their causes to the built structures of La Ciénaga, and the related social and personal disorder of the barrio.

Speaking about the built space of the barrio, María emphasises the stresses that result from living in a small space with difficult people;

<i>'[uno es] permanentemente pendiente que</i>	'[one is] permanently aware that you are
<i>va a volver a ver esa persona y lo mire</i>	going to see that person again and you see
<i>ahí, y ahí, y nunca tiene tranquilidad</i>	them there, and there, and you never have
<i>espiritual...'</i>	spiritual peace...'

'Las casas también se ponen malas...', 'houses too become bad', María explains. It is hard to avoid people who have either hurt your feelings or physically injured you. This difficulty in turn becomes part of a vicious circle in which negative feelings associated with living in such a cramped place become attached to the place itself. Homes (which should be the refuge) become 'infected', 'heavy' with bad feelings, places where people cannot sleep or rest.

The social troubles of the barrio manifest themselves in the *chisme*: rumour and feelings of envy which give rise to further nightmares. Jealousy of another's material possessions results in the prying gaze which crosses the threshold: *'...eso también fucusea a uno'*, '...that too bewitches you'. Abandoned lovers and offended friends suffer from the 'green envy' caused by emotional betrayal.

<i>'Angustias. Usted tiene una amistad</i>	'Anxiety. You have a friendship sown
<i>sembrada dentro de tu corazón - verdad?</i>	within your heart - right? You never think
<i>Esa amistad nunca espera que van a pagar</i>	that friendship will short change you.'

con mala moneda.’

In earlier chapters I discussed the ways in which these processes of rumour, envy and distrust limit the possibility of friendship and community. María explains how these processes (which she also sees as closely related to the built space) are internalised.

Disappointments, thwarted hopes and aspirations (such as the dreams of Amparo and her friends) are not for María shameful subjects. They are the defining characteristics of the barrio: the personal nightmare.

While María can ‘see’ and understand this inner turmoil, she is not always entirely sympathetic. Some of those who come to her with the more quotidian troubles of a nightmare existence are seen as foolish. There are women who believe that their husbands have been arrested and taken to prison. María knows where to look. These men are not in prison, they have been with their *amiguitas* [little girl friends]. In hushed, rhetorical and not uncritical tones, María asks me why the women take on such bad company.

María’s insights, like the *zozobra* itself, are both mystical (‘few can travel as far as she can’) and practical. They are also frequently moralistic and quasi religious in tone. There are other nightmares she tells me, sometimes distinguishable, sometimes not, that grow from guilt and the dreamers wrong doing; ‘that which you call a nightmare is the same thing you sow. Because if you plant cassava you are not going to wait for a fig tree to appear. Right? That is the way I walk’. References to ‘walking’ and to guilt, the idea

that you reap what you sow, underline María's inheritance of Catholic imagery and liturgy. It is not only her religious festivals that closely mirror and then subvert the teachings of the church.

These are stories told by María in her own way, at her own pace. When I attempt direct questions she will never be drawn. I try to press her on the subject of anguish. I want to know what form the nightmares take, whether the troubles mirror those told to the priest in confession. Suddenly María's tone is practical. Why she wonders would I need to ask such a question. My own troubled soul is used to illustrate the point.

<i>M: La gente vive llena de angustia.</i>	<i>M: People live full of anxiety. They</i>
<i>Tantas cosas que están mirando. Ud.</i>	<i>see so many things. You yourself feel bad,</i>
<i>mismo se siente mal, yo lo sé, se siente mal.</i>	<i>I know, you feel bad.</i>
<i>hc: Yo?</i>	<i>hc: Me?</i>
<i>M: Sí - ud. a tenido momentos que se</i>	<i>M: Yes - you have had moments when</i>
<i>siente mal, varios momentos. Lo sabe,</i>	<i>you feel bad, various moments. I know</i>
<i>porque tú, caminando dentro del barrio,</i>	<i>because as you walk inside the barrio you</i>
<i>ves cosas que te aflijen el alma y tú como te</i>	<i>see things which pain your soul and it as if</i>
<i>quedas con eso.</i>	<i>somehow this stays with you.</i>

Not for the first time I become the subject of my own research and I feel uncomfortable. I wonder what emotions I have unintentionally revealed as I have walked the barrio. I know María's words are true and I realise that I am being challenged to listen in a different

way. As an integral part of the story (as opposed to a detached seer), I am being invited to listen with my senses, with my imagination.

The dreams and anxieties of which María speaks are those which have the ability to '*trastornar*', 'violently disorder' both the dreamer and the place of the barrio. What also become disordered as María speaks are the boundaries between the dreamed and the lived, rumour and practised violence. While in many barrio stories similar troubling elements can be covered over, only the details borrowed which fit the stories of the planner, in the case of María's stories this becomes impossible; the troubling elements are too loud. What is recounted is something quite different about the pressures and forces of barrio living. The effects as seen in Lupina's story which follows can be devastating.

In 1993 Lupina had been one of the women I worked with. She lived on one of the wider arteries of La Ciénaga from where she ran the local lottery or '*zan*' as it is known. I liked her: she was open, friendly, astute. She complained of 'nerves' and depression, was vocal about the problems of violent men but so were many and thus while her stories pained me I didn't pay them particular attention at the time. I looked forward to seeing her again and, on my return to La Ciénaga, I was saddened to find she had left and surprised to see her house, one of the more substantial constructions of concrete block, to be empty and in an advanced state of tumbling disrepair. A slide of her leaning against the lottery board of winning numbers, smiling into the sun, never elicited any comment. Nobody could tell me where she had gone or why.

<i>'Hecha agua caliente porque es para</i>	'Get hot water because it's to heat things
<i>calentar que después que las cosas son</i>	up because after things are hot one gets
<i>caliente uno consigue mas o menos lo que</i>	more or less what one wants because
<i>quiere porque hay. El frío es prieto, no es</i>	they're there. The cold is black, it's not
<i>blanco no. Hay gente que lo envidía -</i>	white, no. There are people who envy it -
<i>haber si es que no me entiende todavía</i>	let's see if you still understand me because
<i>porque yo estoy dando muchas clases.</i>	I'm giving you a lot of lessons. But
<i>Pero digo que no me canso porque ella (ie.</i>	[addressing Margot, who has dropped in] I
<i>hc) no es como nosotras. Después usted</i>	tell you I don't get tired because she [hc] is
<i>va a hechar un baño dulce. Dos baños</i>	not like us. Afterwards you are going to
<i>dulces. Un día martes. Y después ud. viene</i>	make a sweet bath. Two sweet baths. On
<i>y yo lo receto dos ud. verá. Un demonio.</i>	a Tuesday. And then you come and I
<i>Frente el colmado donde vendía lotería.</i>	prescribe two. You will see. A devil. In
<i>Esa señora vivía parte atrás con la hija</i>	front of the colmado where they sold
<i>casada. En la noche oyen ruidos,</i>	lottery. That woman lived in the part
<i>golpazos, alguien andando, los trastes</i>	behind with her married daughter. One
<i>moviendo. Cuando despertaban</i>	night they heard noises, great blows,
<i>encontraban un desorden, sábanas lleno de</i>	someone walking around, their things
<i>sangre. Esas son cosas del demonio que</i>	moving about. When they woke up they
<i>necesitan atención de los que saben, por</i>	found disorder, their sheets full of blood.

<p><i>envidia de personas, de cualquier cosa, uno también tiene que estar precavido de las cosas. En fin ella tuviera que mudar...'</i></p> <p><i>'...hace dos años, a Puerto Plata.'</i> (Margot)</p> <p><i>'Mire las pesadillas le viene a ud. que le gusta mucho bubububububububuchichero, que lleva su vida. Todo lo que dice ud. no es lo que es. Esa persona cae mal porque todo lo que tu haces sale mal. Eso le entra ud. pesadillas porque ud. se acuesta, y se duerme, se duerme peleando. Ud se levanta (respirando pesado) sobre asustada. Eso son cosas de gente bochinchera que forman ganchos a cualquiera. [ahora cantando] Yo estoy diciendo que es así, eso es así, es así. Que mal a mal, no es el mal, se conviene, el mal se acumula.'</i></p>	<p>Those are the things of the devil that need attention from those who know, its envy of people for whatever thing. One also has to have foresight about things. Well, to finish, she had to move...'</p> <p>'...two years ago to Puerto Plata.' [Margot inserts]</p> <p>'Look nightmares come to you who like a lot of bubububububububuchichero, which takes over your life. Everything that you say is not as it seems. That person falls badly because whatever you do comes out badly. This goes inside you - nightmares - because you lie down and you sleep, you sleep fighting. You get up (heavy panting noises) more than terrified. Those are things of people who make an uproar (i.e. gossip), that become a trap for anyone. [now singing] I am telling you that things are this way, they are this way, this way. That evil to the evil is not evil, it suits</p>
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them, the evil accumulates.’

I don’t know how to interpret this story. It is Margot who gives odd prosaic details such as the fact that Lupina has gone to Puerto Plata (in the north west of the island), and that the incident took place two years ago. She lives virtually opposite Lupina’s house and I have asked her on a couple of previous occasions both where Lupina is and why nobody lives there now. In other encounters and places, alone in her home or with friends in their homes, my questions have elicited no response. In this story the much feared rumour and gossip has devastating consequences. Was Lupina’s fate engineered by neighbours who distrusted her forthrightness or envied her control of the lottery. Control of the *zan* is hard work but one of the most lucrative enterprises within the barrio. It is also a complicated and delicate business; to ensure that all those within the barrio who contribute do so on time, that the person who wins is seen to do so through fairness, that the military godfathers who control the barrio lotteries from above the bridge are kept sweet.

I will never know if Lupina’s sheets were really covered in blood but I do draw two conclusions from this and the other extraordinary stories that María tells. Firstly I realise there are some things which just cannot be rendered intelligible within the frameworks of reference of which I am part. I referred in the beginning of this chapter to the bumps and curves within stories which, if heard, make the barrio intelligible on its own terms. The barrio is a very particular place and there are (a few) other bumps such as some of the

elements within Lupina's story which remain beyond my understanding. I draw on feminist writings which discuss the dangers of colonising all knowledge in an attempt to ensure that it is understood, and accept that I am neither able, nor would it be desirable, to tidy everything into my own story.²⁶⁵

Secondly, I come to understand that, although María's analysis contains some of these inexplicable elements, her power and contentment is, paradoxically, not rooted in another separate understanding of place. María's narrative does not convey a different world after all, but a radical reinterpretation of the worlds above and below the bridge and the way they are joined.²⁶⁶ That is, María presents much more than a view from below. In the way her story is woven the distinctions of above and below fall apart. Thus for example Lupina's problems of this world are interpreted with reference to the spiritual realm and the difficulties of the *tigueraje* below the bridge are linked to political and economic policies above the bridge. It is this relinking of worlds that I would argue is the secret of María's success. Explicitly she avoids the 'clash of consciences' which bring so much tension to those who live around her. For María, Lupina or Margarita's anxieties that come from trying to live both the expectations and realities of above and below the bridge in their relationships, in their work, in their dreams, is a challenge which doesn't

²⁶⁵ See the distinction I draw in my introduction between incorporation and assimilation. See also Spivak's emphasis on the heterogeneity of representation (in Young 1990: 163), and Butler's own concern with definition as an exclusionary practice (Butler 1990: 5). Parallels can also be drawn here with Lefebvre's critique of narratives that 'flatten' (Lefebvre 1974/91: 312-313).

²⁶⁶ Interestingly, when I question Jorge Cela SJ about her role in the *barrio* (the witch is ignored by the Jesuit parish priests), he concludes that both she and her role will disappear when the church in particular is more inclusive and current dichotomies disappear.

exist. In the lived story which is both her narrative and her work María is able to achieve a sense of balance and happiness. It is this sense that she tries to convey to others within the barrio as she reweaves elements of their lives in new stories; stories to heal.

SHAPE SHIFTING: STORIES TO HEAL THE BARRIO AND SOUL

In a place that must now be understood very differently, María's stories make a cogent argument to support her business: that of 'cleansing' the barrio and the tormented souls who live there. This is the aspect of María's stories to which I turn next: the way in which her stories are used to shift people internally, to cleanse and heal the anguish she has diagnosed.

María, free and happy, sees her role as that of ridding those around her of their tyrannies. When I returned again to La Ciénaga in 1997, she had decided that, since 'our blood mingles well', I should be enrolled in formal classes (classes which ended abruptly when she tried to teach me how to foresee death). I was instructed to come early every Tuesday morning before the evil of the day could enter. I arrived the first week to find María, resplendent in orange, offering each of her luás a precious cup of coffee and a prayer. María led me inside and seated me on her throne at the side of her altar.

As María smokes the first cigar of the morning the rising plumes of smoke cause the sun to fall in biblical shafts on to her altar. Characteristically, she does not bemoan the holes in her roof which make this possible: she gives thanks to her sun; '*bienvenido mis rayos, mi sol...*', 'welcome my sun rays, my sun...' María's long altar rises in tiers along one side of the small inner room. Grubby cloths are cluttered with a myriad of objects, both mysterious and mundane: coca cola bottles, beads, stones and bones jostle with cracked china, vessels of peculiar coloured and vile smelling liquids, innumerable portraits of saints and other beings. Tattered banners hang from the ceiling above.

María's altar is typical of the 'servers' of the voodoo religion and it has been suggested by Robert Ferris Thompson, in a fascinating study of African and Afro American arts and philosophy, that the power of these altars lies precisely in their representation of complex ideas represented by specially selected objects and their juxtaposition.²⁶⁷ The flags above the altar celebrate the liminal: unfurled and paraded they stand at the boundaries of inter-secting worlds. The objects symbolise a way of thinking which accepts a sense of disjuncture and celebrates ideas which overlap and compete.

Thompson's interpretations, in particular the emphasis on juxtaposition and the coexistence of contradictory ideas and states, seems to encapsulate the way María sees the world. It is a way of looking and understanding which lies at the heart of María's healing methods. A way of looking which is interesting precisely because it is alien to the nineteenth century approaches I have criticised.

María's method is to centre the contradictions endemic to the barrio and emphasise their mobility over time. Clash and contradiction, '*el choque entre conciencias*', 'the clash between consciences', which others fear, are approached rather differently by María. Her intention is not to smooth away such contradictions, but rather to acknowledge both their existence and their transience: '*nada dura para estable*', 'nothing endures to be stable', María advises, conveying a sense of balance and flux, as opposed to a finite solution.

In voodoo there is a flow between the material and the non-material, the inside and the outside, the emotions and the body. The problems and issues of power and control and thus the process of healing are all characterized and understood as fluidity and flexibility.²⁶⁸ Tranquillity depends on allowing a process of ebb and flow; a process that must be allowed to evolve naturally. When María advises patience, she conveys neither the resignation of Yonesa, nor the fighting of Fautina. Organic metaphors illustrate her thinking; 'if you plant the root of jojoba, you are not going to get cassava or good beans'; you have to plant, but you also have to expect the fruits of what you plant. The contrast with the president's architect Carbonell who, when I interviewed him, used similar imagery to express a very different view point is apposite. 'After the mango comes the nispero and then the limoncillo...' he told me in frustration at the barrio dweller's apparent lack of a proactive approach. Carbonell interprets this ability to let

²⁶⁷ Thompson 1984: 182-184

‘nature’ take its course as the resigned laziness of the barrio dweller. María by contrast emphasises that, below the bridge, this reliance on fluid, organic change is a recipe for sanity and survival.

Given the conditions of the barrio, María’s ‘recipe’ for happiness is to adopt a fluid and flexible attitude towards material possessions (something as I have illustrated in chapter two with reference to the household objects, *trastes*, that residents do strive to achieve), towards relationships and towards inner thoughts and emotions. Using the barrio’s youth as an example María explicitly explains that mental agony, or anxiety, comes from an attempt to fit personal diverse experience within one internal framework; ‘*nada más que tienen una sola melodía mental*’, ‘they have nothing but one mental melody’. This makes them both troubled and troublesome. An analogy can be drawn between María’s interpretations and those of feminists such as de Lauretis who understand individual experience as a process of continuing negotiation of external pressures and internal resistances.²⁶⁹ To rigidify personal narrative is interpreted by María as a limitation on one’s own possibilities; at its most extreme, a violent way of inflicting personal pain. Mental ease entails a process of bending with the winds, adapting and waiting.

The practical method by which María heals and teaches is both to tell stories, chant poetic riddles and to listen to the tales of others. (Indeed, as I have emphasised, the form

²⁶⁸ Brown 1997: 137

of María's own stories echoes her philosophy of healing; her stories are contradictory and mobile in their content, musical in their delivery.) María's frequent allusions to the 'company' she provides and the people with whom she 'walks', refer to the role of stories, talking and listening within her work. The process lets people release what they are carrying inside and eases a little the mental pain; '*lo saca dialogamente (sic) y le voy conversando hasta borrarle un poco la mente*', 'it is taken out dialoguing and I go talking with them until a little of their mind is rubbed away'. Her clients tell stories which gradually shift and change. The process of repetition slowly rubs out old themes and uncovers new ones. Different ideas emerge; unexpected links and connections are made. In María's theatrical hands, the previously negative clash of consciences becomes a creative process. Gradually a new, more bearable story is woven: this is one of María's cures, what she refers to as the 'sowing of a new seed in the heart'.

The idea that stories can heal is neither new, nor culturally specific to the barrio. Writing of the black American experience at the turn of the century DuBois explains both the importance of narratives as a means to express and ease disappointment; the sorrow songs which are the siftings of centuries, and of the importance of coming to stories which are your own, not those of another, 'stories which do not tear you in two'.²⁷⁰ Stories in other words can form part of a personal healing process and a transgenerational healing process; erasing the sense of exclusion to which both Arismendy and Margarita have

²⁶⁹ Lauretis 1990: 137. See also the discussion on reincorporating the emotions in the introduction.

referred. Before considering what this potential might offer in terms of tools for the policy maker, I want to turn to two processes that I suggest do have parallels with María's methods within the barrio; that of confession, the only other form of private talking within the barrio, and that of psychoanalysis, which, spliced with the work of feminists has, as I described in my introduction, influenced my own approach to the barrio, in particular my interest in re-incorporating the emotions. I draw these parallels in order to further describe by analogy, the potential of María's methods.

Personal stories, as I have suggested with reference to hooks' work in the introduction, have the effect of heightening our awareness and understanding. The listener is drawn in by an individual's personal interpretations and new ways of looking are brought about through the dislocation of once closely bordered spheres.²⁷¹ María's own stories act within La Ciénaga as a magnifying glass or an amplifier: they exaggerate the strange elements found to a lesser (and often ignored) extent in the stories of other residents and make loud the silences and absences in the stories of others. They also amplify the silences and blind spots among the planners and policy makers above the bridge. María makes important things which the planners never consider: the role of local history and the emotions for example. She emphasises the way elements which might seem unconnected are related and affect each other. I am arguing that these absences and unexpected connections (particularly those between the emotions and the built space) are

²⁷⁰ Du Bois 1903/1994: 157, 5

both the central reason the planner's vision fails and the key to re-imagining the barrio in a different way.

The Catholic confession provides the only other opportunity within the barrio for private talking and the confidential expression of personal stories. This private space which the confession represents and a reading of Sennett's work on the subject make me interested in the comparative role of the confession within the barrio. Sennett suggests that the historical development of the Catholic confessional is one intimately bound up with the process of urbanisation.²⁷² The tensions of the modern city give rise to a need for a personal explanatory narrative. At the same time the nature of the city gives the conditions for anonymity which the confession requires. Sennett describes how the urban confession develops beyond a (rural) formulaic ritual into a story telling process in which neither the teller nor the listener at first understands what is being spoken. It is the act of confession which makes sense of the story. A personal narrative emerges and, Sennett asserts, the priest shows compassion at the moment it becomes intelligible. This is a process which has obvious parallels with María's own description of her methods.

I tried to debate the role of the confession with the barrio priests. However, just as María would not discuss with me the precise details of any client's problem, (during working hours a loud transistor radio plays outside the cardboard partition which divides off the

²⁷¹ hooks 1990: 112

room with the altar), so the priests would not be drawn, despite my audacious inquiries. More generically, Cela did suggest to me that repetitive talking is central to any process of personal change. He argued however that it is the process of community meetings and the repetitious talking which they involve (when the community is process as opposed to goal oriented), rather than the confession, which are cathartic within the barrio.²⁷³ Spontaneously linking the built space and issues of personal emotion, Cela talked of the community meetings as redemptive: 'redeeming' not only the person, but the urban space'.²⁷⁴

The parallels between psychoanalysis and voodoo have been described by Karen McCarthy Brown in her work on voodoo healing. The therapeutic aspects of psychoanalysis can be understood within colloquial terms as a story telling process. In the presence of a distanced outsider (the analyst), the client or analysand tells stories which gradually erase old interpretations of their own lives, uncover the source of tension and enable a new story to be told. The new story is coherent to the analysand and allows for a new found sense of ease. This is a process which does seem to describe María's methods. It is also a process which describes my own work in the barrio. As an

²⁷² Sennett 1994: 174 - 176

²⁷³ There is an implicit critique of both the 'Oxfam' and the 'World Bank' models of community here: as I discussed in chapter one, neither of these approaches allow for repetitive talking, since they are goal oriented.

²⁷⁴ Cela pers.com. May 1997. Cela's views echo and are influenced by those of Touraine (see for example Touraine 1992/95). Interestingly, Hoggett's recent work makes similar claims for the potential role of political meetings (1992).

insider/outsider I am trusted with stories that are often not shared with neighbours or colleagues. As the stories are told new connections are made and different ideas emerge.

Brown draws attention to the way in which, in voodoo practices as in psychoanalysis, the patient is active in the diagnosis, which starts from the story given by the patient or analysand, although it usually ends up being about a problem that is not the one initially presented. 'The presenting symptom, though carefully articulated and attended to by the healer, is to some extent arbitrary. In other words, trouble with one's father could equally well result in stomach pains or difficulty on the job. [the healers] thus see the person as defined by a relational matrix and disturbance at any point in that matrix can create problems anywhere else'.²⁷⁵ Brown's comparisons with psychoanalysis and her image of the relational matrix, allowing for the connection of various ideas and experiences, emphasise precisely those aspects of María's vision and methods that I find so fascinating.

I am aware of the controversial nature of this comparison and my own analysis.

Psychoanalysis has itself been a subject surrounded by ambiguity since Freud's earliest writings. As Steve Pile points out in his introduction to psychoanalytic thought, there is

²⁷⁵ Brown 1997: 129

nothing within psychoanalysis which is generally accepted.²⁷⁶ Both the interpretation of Freud's writings and the therapeutic value of his methods remain disputed.

What comes over from María's stories is also controversial: always suggestive and therefore open to multiple interpretations. Much of what I draw out from her words is only ever implied. Indeed my attempts to concretise are either ignored or rebutted. On one occasion, apropos of nothing much at all, María delivered a lecture on the dangers of over intellectualising; '*... la gente se intelectuela la mente...eso se hace daño. Eso le come los globulos rojos, los globulos rojos del cerebro y eso le trae mucho daño*', '*...people intellectualise the mind...that does you harm. That eats the red corpuscles, the red corpuscles of the brain and that brings a lot of damage*'. I listened amused, curious, not sure whether I was being admonished with this poetic riddle.²⁷⁷

By emphasising the comparison between María's methods and psychoanalysis, I hope to emphasise both the possibility of listening in a different way and the closely related emphasis on the emotions. María, like the analyst, listens to secrets, those things which

²⁷⁶ Pile 1996: 7

²⁷⁷ This 'lecture' might also be interpreted within a Foucauldian framework whereby the universal intellectual who works within global theory and systematising modes of thought is contrasted with the person who works with local, situated knowledge.

There is never time to tell. On this particular visit I am to be taught the first of her many practical remedies, a cure for bewitched or 'infected' houses, a method to be rid of the surrounding 'blackness'. María plunges into a list of exotic herbs and forest roots, waters to dominate, waters to poison, waters to frighten the devil.. '*... para eso hojas de canelilla, oregano. primero hecho un bano amargo. El amargo lleva namú, cundíamor, guajugo, rompezaraguey, guanabana, hierba araza conto*' (sic ie. con todo), *lleva hoja de carbo santo, eso se llama un bano amargo entonces en ese bano amargo no se puede hechar nada dulce. Lo hecha con armoniaco, agua araza conto*', *agua dominadora, agua venedora, agua espanta diábol, eso es para defucusear. Le estoy diciendo esto es hediondo porque un bano que lleve hojas de guandules, lleva namú, apasote y lleve eso lo que estoy diciendo eso es un bano de defucusear, para aliviar la casa, para sacar lo negro alrededor. Se desahuma con un poco de patchouli y romero seco que no es con incenso, no, es raíz para sacarse de ese bano. Es con eso y con cascara de china solo. De abajo de la cama, toda la cama.*'

are normally circumscribed or left unsaid. These are very often stories of the emotions. I am interested in the possibility both the listening and the subject matter offer for an alternative methodological approach. Whether María's methods can alter the built space, without which I have argued that the emotions cannot ultimately be addressed, remains an open question.

The stories which do emerge in this process centre the emotions and in turn can only be fully understood with the senses. Emotions, as I have argued previously, determine how people inter-act with each other, within their homes and towards their barrio. I have referred in chapter one to the archaeologies of self, and in my introduction, to the way in which layers of emotion influence the individual. These emotions are acquired and imbricated within an individual, in complex ways that are often difficult for the outsider to see or understand.²⁷⁸

Personal histories as a residue of experiences which produce feelings, thoughts and actions which, while they cannot be readily explained, do influence individual choices and behaviour, is something readily understood within the barrio. Amparo was the most explicit in describing her personal attempts to access these memories, but many explained to me the complicated ways in which previous experiences influence and determine their

²⁷⁸ Again, these processes have been the study of comment and analysis on the part of feminist scholars whose work is spliced with psychoanalytic theory. 'The way we live as 'ideas' the necessary laws of human society is not so much conscious as *unconscious* - the particular task of psychoanalysis is to decipher how we acquire our heritage of the ideas and laws of human society within the unconscious mind, or to put it

lives in ways which are not always comfortable. María focuses on these internal workings; how people feel inside themselves. As she listens she crinkles her nose, switches her eyes from side to side in quick fire motion, inhales deeply as if tasting her surroundings and then exhales with a deep, understanding 'aaah'. As I watch these characteristic gestures I feel that she is indeed deploying all her senses as she interprets. The rational mind is called upon but so are the less rational feelings. To fully understand you can neither be the detached researcher nor the rational planner.

Stories and the emotions challenge the neatly bounded world view of the planner, the architect and the policy maker. Indeed, María's approach seems to directly contravene that of these professions. She declares herself to be fallible. While she is irritated when her summoned spirits elude her, she is also accepting. Her powers are not hers to 'own', they work through her. Similarly, she does not establish herself in a directly hierarchical position with her clients: she accompanies them and they are active in the process. She embraces that which is out of control or unfixed: the forces which clash. María's work overturns the grid, a metaphor for things which can be neatly pegged out at a safe distance from each other. She blurs the distinctions between the above and below, upsets the dichotomies of theory and practice, mundane and spiritual, emotional and physical. That which previously seemed rational is made to seem arbitrary: genealogy, Foucault reminds

another way, the unconscious mind is the way we acquire these laws'. Juliet Mitchell cited in de Lauretis (1990; 124).

us, celebrates itself as an anti-science.²⁷⁹ Of course this is not an approach that many of La Ciénaga's residents desire, as discussed in chapter three, there are those who long for the supposedly ordered life above the bridge. It does however reflect their material reality and as such is a realistic starting point for an alternative policy approach, a method of healing.

Relational matrices (seen by Brown as central to the healing process) communicate an image of further dimensions and multiple connections, in keeping with that which is conveyed by María's polyphonic stories. María understands both those who live in the barrio and the barrio itself as a spiritual, emotional and structural matrix. She, like me, emphasises the inter actions between the built space of the barrio and the inner tensions of those who live there. Her psychoanalytic processes and her understandings of these matrices within the person enable her to address the emotions and heal the soul. What remedies I wonder can she offer the ailing barrio, the dilapidated physical structures of La Ciénaga.

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²⁷⁹ Foucault 1976/80: 83

Lefebvre has conjured with the idea of 'space doctors' prescribed for 'ailing neighbourhoods'.²⁸⁰ It is a nice image and a position which one suspects that María, queen of the barrio, would like to occupy. María claims for herself not just spiritual but temporal powers of sight. Her stories recognise the negative impact of the built space on those who live there and perhaps, partly for this reason, María is acutely aware both of the need for physical improvements to the barrio, and of those which have already taken place.

María, observant (or informed by her observers) is the only person to refer directly and unprompted to the barrio *obras*, the infrastructural improvements which have taken place since 1993. The new *escalones* [concrete stairs] she tells me have made everybody's life easier and 'her' barrio needs more such works. I constantly marvel at where she gets this information from, she rarely seems to leave her house, which, on the banks of the cañada Bonavide is a relatively long way from the escalones. It is not that the escalones are secret in any way, but those who live around them never mention them in conversation. María however has them in her purview, improvements to her realm.

The barrio needs more such improvements and, she recognises, the difficulties are a city wide problem. '*Y este barrio es una sola incumplición, son todos los barrios en zozobra herviendo.*'; 'And this barrio is only one of those unfulfilled, all the barrios are boiling with anxiety.', she points out. If she could improve the barrio she would, if people need

²⁸⁰ Lefebvre 1974/91: 99

a plantain she has one, if they need five pesos she would lend it. But this is the problem. María has neither a plantain nor five pesos. What she does have is a way of looking that reveals the tools the planners are without; those factors they cannot see but which determine the success of their projects. Her stories and insights alone however are not enough. She cannot heal the built space of her barrio; and thus the tangle between the physical structures and the emotions remains.

María's lyrical double talking: the content and process of her stories reveal the extraordinary and the ordinary: this is the reality María sees and those around her live. Her stories enable the listener to think of the barrio in creative and surprising ways. Her 'company' addresses the person and their troubles in such a way that tensions are healed: the individual, no longer fractured, is ready to participate.

Yet this *modus operandi* is not without its problems and I do not want to romanticise the role María can play within the barrio or with reference to those above the bridge. It is not only that she cannot physically improve the barrio or that she is fallible and at times a purveyor of non sense. It is that she does not, and perhaps cannot, engage in a dialogue with those above the bridge. While she draws on established facts and erudite knowledge as well as the subjugated knowledges she invents and uncovers, the stories which emerge are too strange. They can be too easily dismissed as mad or eccentric. While it might not cause her concern, her protests, like those of Amparo, go largely unheard. It may be because those above the bridge feel threatened that they choose to ignore her existence

within the barrio. There is a long Dominican history within academia and politics of denying the existence of voodoo.²⁸¹ Alternatively, as Foucault himself adroitly acknowledges, in his discussion of local criticism, the ‘silence’ of the enemy, in this case those above the bridge, might be the result of the failure to produce any fear at all.²⁸² Either way, this lack of dialogue makes María’s methods problematic as a transformative project. Her stories cannot be seen or used in any practical sense as an alternative model to those of Oxfam or the World Bank.

Stories expose the problem: they bring out the issues and questions from a barrio perspective. They make possible the juxtaposition of unusual subject matter and encourage different ways of listening and seeing: both are the foundations of a creative process. Barrio stories then can show the way, illuminate another path. (The sense of the something else, the psychoanalytic excess.) They can also (when manipulated by María) heal the inner tensions experienced by those who must live in the barrio. They cannot however solve the problems of the barrio anymore than María’s spells can rebuild the cañada. External threads are still needed (those of the engineer, the planner), but they must be woven in a particular way.

²⁸¹ Deive notes that it was not until 1946 that the first article was published in the press about the existence of ‘Dominican voodoo’ (Deive 1988: 170). It is still common to suggest that what practices remain are ‘Haitian’.

²⁸² Foucault 1976/80: 87

In the following chapter I will look more closely at the methods of the engineer and the planner, and their effects within the barrio. María has emphasised the emotions. Thus, in chapter five I consider the effects of addressing and emphasising the concrete: the built space of the barrio.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT: STREETS AND SEWERS

‘One thing for sure, the streets will confuse you,
teach you or break your head.’

Toni Morrison²⁸³

In the Dominican elections of 1996 President Balaguer finally ceded power. The victory of Leonel Fernandez of the PLD,²⁸⁴ broke the virtual stranglehold Balaguer and his PRSC party had held over Dominican politics, since the assassination of the dictator Trujillo (Balaguer’s mentor) in 1996.²⁸⁵ Also broken was the ancient Dominican political feud between Balaguer and his octogenerian rival Juan Bosch, the former head of the PLD and leader of the anti Trujillo forces in the civil war of 1965. The newly incumbent president, in his forties, represented a new generation and a multitude of new hopes. He immediately announced a new urban vision.

²⁸³ *Jazz*, 1992: 173

²⁸⁴ The PLD (Partido de la Liberación Dominicana) is one of the three main Dominican political parties. Originally a party of the far left, headed by the ‘communist’ Juan Bosch, it is now described as a party of the centre. The other parties are the right wing PRSC (Partido Reformista Social Cristiano), headed by Balaguer and the centre left PRD (Partido Revolucionario Dominicano).

²⁸⁵ Balaguer, previously Trujillo’s ‘right hand man’ first became president in 1966. The infamous first ‘twelve years’, referred to in chapter one, came to an end with the election of Antonio Guzman of the PRD in 1978, followed by the government of Salvador Jorge Blanco, also of the PRD, elected in 1982. The PRD were discredited following internal splits and allegations that the Blanco government had been involved in massive corruption. Balaguer returned to power in 1986, calling periodic and increasingly fraudulent elections. Electoral fraud in 1990 provoked a widespread political crisis and, in the face of mounting international and national criticism, Balaguer agreed to recall elections in 1991 (see Moya Pons 1992).

Five years to the day since La Ciénaga and Los Guandules were condemned as a place of public danger, not fit for human life, the new president announced a programme of urban renewal. On the 17th of September 1996 President Leonel Fernández published decree 443-96, revoking the threat of eviction in La Ciénaga. The cañadas are to be lined and covered, the callejones graded and asphalted: streets and sewers; the longed for infrastructure is to be provided.

Receiving members of the barrio organisation COPADEBA within the presidential palace and later visiting the barrio, the president expressly used the decree to symbolise the dialogue he wished to establish with the residents of the city's *barrios marginados*, marginal barrios. He denounced Balaguer's decree of 1991 as 'an abrogation of constitutional prerogative', ordering the marines out of the barrio and guaranteeing 'the free circulation of the inhabitants of La Ciénaga and Los Guandules'. The infrastructure should be seen as a symbol of citizenship, the right to the city. Or part of it. The following day the new president also announced intensified economic adjustment measures; fuel prices were increased, the currency devalued.²⁸⁶

An infrastructure project begins. A large road sign on the newly named Avenida Caamaño marks the barrio's physical location and its new status within the rhetoric of the city. In a high profile inauguration of the works three thousand five hundred cubic metres of

²⁸⁶ *Listín Diario, Hoy*, 19 September, 1996

rubbish are removed from the cañada Bonavide. Road construction is started on the higher ground of Los Guandules at those points, visible to those outside the barrio, where the ‘streets’ meet the Avenida. The works are announced as the physical manifestation of the new urban vision. La Ciénaga is to be the model of a ‘*reordamiento urbano*’ urban re-ordering planned for twenty of the city’s barrios. RD\$ fourteen million (about US\$ one million in newly devalued terms) are committed to the project.

Santo Domingo has a new story to tell and, as the JCBs move into the barrio, the journalists again descend. Their story is not the one expected. *Hoy*, the left leaning broad sheet most sympathetic to the barrio protests of earlier years, published ‘*un lamento en el arrabal*’, ‘a lament of the slum’;

‘...*necesitamos que nos saquen de aquí.*

‘...we need them to take us out of here.

Esto es inaguantable’.

This is unbearable.’

In a series of articles the paper quotes the views of the disillusioned residents and documents local protests. Placards and hecklers greet the visiting president, demanding the immediate displacement not of some of the residents, but of all forty thousand. As those above the bridge move their new urban vision inside the barrio so the inside appears to turn outwards. In an almost complete reversal of positions it is now the residents themselves who argue that they can no longer live in this miserable and terrifying ‘plague infested terrain’.²⁸⁷

This chapter tells the story of one month in La Ciénaga, that of April 1997. I returned once again, from London, to the barrio to find the infrastructure project underway. I thus spent the first month of my stay talking about its repercussions, listening to the way the project progress was viewed, observing the successes, the problems and the final disastrous end. In earlier chapters I have shown the extent to which the emotions, aspirations and identities of the barrio residents are imbricated in the vagabond structures of the barrio; in particular negative feelings are associated with the spaces of the cañadas and the callejones. The previous chapter has shown that to understand the emotions which arise from and are part of living in the barrio, is to present an important and new perspective on the barrio. To address only the residents' emotions is however insufficient. Given the complex relationship between self and built space, the built space must also be altered. This chapter then explores the residents attitudes to the progress of their infrastructure project: the effects of addressing the built space of the barrio.

APRIL 1997

Returning to the barrio in April I lose my way in the new streets, which have already been completed on the higher ground of Los Guandules. Disguised by asphalt, my familiar path down to La Ciénaga can no longer be distinguished. The smell is different and there is a new, intense heat as the sun's rays are harshly deflected between zinc roofs

²⁸⁷ Hoy, 3 November, 1996

and the metalicised surface of the road. It is not only a physical disorientation I experience in these early weeks of my return. I am confused too by the myriad responses of those who live in La Ciénaga towards their infrastructure project. There is at once a heady optimism and a darker side; the sense of foreboding born of the new surveillance to which they are subject. And who, I continue to wonder, were those who confronted the president with a demand for the desalojo.

optimism, pessimism: responses to the infrastructure project

The sense of optimism is palpable. On a Saturday the roads are a havoc of wheelbarrows, roller blades, cycles and cockerels. The cockerels are staked out in rows at the still sticky road edges to be angered by the sun: a serious preparation for the cock fights and a comical appropriation of the new 'modern' roads. The cyclists and roller bladers dodge between each other, their movements a celebratory tracing of this newly possible form of entertainment.

It is the wheelbarrows that are the most striking expression of this new found confidence. The hurry skurry of building, home improvement, mending and joining is like a barrio fever. Inspired by the 'magnificent' construction in the cañada Bonavide, the residents of La Ciénaga have started their own building works. A barrio where previously the marines prevented even a plank of wood being carried in, has become a construction site.

Jacqueline has put down a concrete floor in her house. She looks so much better than she did a year ago, her round face smoothed of earlier anxieties. With pride she tells me that by next year I won't recognise a thing. She talks like a property developer, they could level a bit of the barrio here, build an apartment there. '*Nadie va a querer irse*', 'nobody is going to want to go' says Yonesa who is actually in the process of moving, building a home the other side of the river. I point out the ambiguity of her claim, 'yes' she tells me, 'but I'm no longer in such a hurry'.

Effervescent stories dance attendance on the physical activity. The details of the presidential meeting and visit are ceaselessly re-counted and embellished with pride. The roads on the higher ground of Los Guandules have already brought undeniable practical benefits to those who live below. Friends visit. The sick can be taken to hospital. There is a collective taxi service which means entering and leaving the barrio you need no longer 'wade in filth' or 'melt in the heat'. (Theoretically at least; no one mentions they cannot afford to use the service.) Miseries once suffered have been erased; '*...ahora no - eso está borrado*'. 'now no - that has been wiped away', Juliana tells me.

'*El imagen del barrio está cambiando*', La Ciénaga's 'image is changing' I am constantly told. But do people feel better inside, about themselves. I press the question one day to a group in Fautina's house; '*claro*', 'of course' they chorus but, when I search for explanations as to how or why, the conversation always swerves away. It is easier to talk about public places than private feelings.

<i>'Sentimos como mucho más cómodo, pues</i>	<i>'We feel so much more comfortable because</i>
<i>estamos ya dentro de una sociedad.</i>	<i>we're now part of a society. We are</i>
<i>Estamos participando en la sociedad, lo</i>	<i>participating in society which is what is</i>
<i>que nos corresponde realmente como</i>	<i>really our right as citizens. One feels so</i>
<i>ciudadanos. Uno siente mas animado,</i>	<i>much more motivated, now we can protest</i>
<i>ahora sí puede protestar y ellos oyen a uno.</i>	<i>and they hear you. They have made</i>
<i>Han hecho arreglos aunque falta bastantes.</i>	<i>improvements although there are still</i>
<i>Lo que falta como transformador, teléfono.</i>	<i>plenty missing. We're missing [things] like</i>
<i>Ya no sentimos preso aquí, ya eso pasó -</i>	<i>powerlines, telephones. But now we don't</i>
<i>somos libres. Los que estamos en el barrio</i>	<i>feel imprisoned here, that's passed now -</i>
<i>estamos tratando de seguir y luchar para lo</i>	<i>we are free. Those of us who are in the</i>
<i>que nos corresponde realmente.'</i>	<i>barrio are trying to follow up and fight for</i>
	<i>those things which are really our due.'</i>

(Amparo)

If increasingly sturdy structures have not led at once to sturdier selves, they have led to a changed sense of public persona. Everyone is voluble about the ways they now feel they are 'participating *inside* the city'. Residents perceive the plans for streets and lined cañadas in terms of a symbolic path system which provides them with a new sense of identity with and within the city. The infrastructure project is explicitly seen in terms of

paths of communication (hence Amparo's comment that it is power lines and telephones that are still missing).

Interestingly, in another context, the planner Dolores Hayden has also characterised urban infrastructure as a path system.²⁸⁸ The physical lines of the planner are seen to create paths for city residents: dictating, or restricting access, to both the memories stored in the urban landscape (a function similar to that of the monument explored in chapter three) and to the services of the wider city. Identity, characterised by Hayden as a sense of political and economic rights within the city, is tied to both a sense of history and current access to the social and technical possibilities of the city.²⁸⁹ I have already emphasised the importance of these issues in earlier chapters.

The reality of the infrastructure project however is somewhat more complex. de Certeau, also interested in the symbolism and possibilities of pathways in the city, warns that the process 'eludes urbanistic systematicity'.²⁹⁰ He suggests that to concentrate on the lines of the planner is to overlook the qualitative aspect of path systems: questions over who has access and who does not, how the new path systems might be used, the 'trees of gestures' with which they are inhabited, remain invisible.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ Hayden 1995: 20

²⁸⁹ Hayden 1995: 27

²⁹⁰ de Certeau: 1974/84: 105

Residents themselves increasingly realise the complexity of the issue. The roads which are completed during the month of April do improve the physical access to the city and provide residents with an array of new perspectives and insights. They also bring unforeseen difficulties, those above the bridge for example are also more easily able to enter the barrio, a use of the paths which is not always welcome. This and other difficulties lead to the increasing sense of pessimism during the month (discussed in more detail below). During the first weeks however the emphasis is on the possibilities of communication.

In the context of La Ciénaga the act of construction persuades (some, for a limited time), that they have access to the city authorities; their protests ‘no longer a cry in the desert because they’ve got us registered now as people’. The promised changes in the built space and the sense of being heard in turn change attitudes towards the community. Previous attempts to organise in order to change the built space were at best fragile. Now that structural changes to the barrio have started however the process of community organisation is seen in a different light. New organisations have been created and the membership of neighbourhood committees has swollen. Among those who have been the barrio’s organisers over the last five years there is an unshakeable conviction that the presidential project is their own achievement, the result of their struggle, rivers of tears and sweat. They claim the constructions as their victory and emphasise their continuing importance as supervisors of the works.

²⁹¹ de Certeau 1974/84: 97, 102

<i>'Las organizaciones se fueron donde el</i>	'The organisations went to the government
<i>gobierno y ellos llevaron el presupuesto.</i>	and took our proposal. The organisations
<i>Las organizaciones llevaron propuestas de</i>	took the proposals of what we wanted to
<i>lo que querían hacer en el barrio. Entonces</i>	do in the barrio. So the authorities
<i>las autoridades aceptaron y se pusieron a</i>	accepted and went to work in the barrio
<i>trabajar en el barrio con las</i>	according to the proposals of the
<i>organizaciones, con el asesoramiento de</i>	organisations and with the advice of the
<i>las organizaciones que estaban (llevando)</i>	organisations who are carrying forward the
<i>el proceso - ellos están haciéndolo porque</i>	process - it's the government who are doing
<i>tienen el dinero, pero con el</i>	it because they are the ones who have the
<i>acompañamiento de las organizaciones.'</i>	money but they are 'accompanied' by the
	barrio organisations.' (Juliana)

The authorities above the bridge have expressed their intention to work with the barrio organisations ('for the moment, for the moment', Silín cautions). Below, the growing numbers who have recovered a sense of angry indignation at 'having been kept stagnant for five years', are determined both to have a role in the process and to see that they get their due. Yet supervision of the works and an equal dialogue do not prove easy. Suspicion on both sides results in strained communication. It is an uneasy 'dialogue' which the residents themselves recognise is born from the experience of living within the congested callejones: a remnant of the previously absent path systems.

<p><i>'Ellos están tratando de llegar para que esto sea una realidad - concretizar eso - de que se tome en cuenta los moradores a la hora de hacer la obra. Uno tiene muchos años en el barrio - aunque aquí no hay ingenieros hay muchas cosas que uno sabe que a ellos le conviene hacerla entonces ellos no toman mucho de eso en cuenta.'</i></p>	<p>'They are trying to get to the point where that [i.e. full participation] will be a reality - concretise it - that they take into account the residents at the time when they come to the works. One has so many years in the barrio - although we don't have engineers, we don't have many things, one knows how it's best to do many things and they don't pay much attention to most of it.'</p> <p>(Juliana)</p>
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<p><i>'Sabes algo? Se basa también en que nosotros por años llevamos eso en la sangre - que el gobierno es que sabe, el gobierno es que hace. Entonces por llevar eso, nosotros siempre nos quedamos ciego.'</i></p>	<p>'You know something ? It's also based in the way in which for years we have carried this in our blood - the government are the ones who know, the government are the ones who do things. So, carrying this, we always remained blind.'</p> <p>(Silín)</p>
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Juliana emphasises the importance of local knowledge and the shared feeling that the authorities are still largely ignoring both the views and expertise of residents. Silín speaks of memories carried in the blood. These are memories which have whispered within barrio residents, reminding them of the historical futility of organising. It is accepted as

‘tradition’ that the planners dictate what is to be constructed, what is to be razed. Those who live in the barrio have become, by their own admission, accustomed to such behaviour. Falsely convinced that they are without rights they have self imposed their own limitations. Determined and hopeful that things might now be different Silín is one of those who emphasises both the difficulty of changing the *way* things are constructed (these are habits carried in the blood) and the importance of such changes in the process of construction, if the residents themselves are not to remain unseeing.

The straight talking of Juliana and Silín reveals their intricate understanding of the issues at stake. At other moments their anxieties are also revealed: will the projects be concluded and what will the streets in particular be used for. By the final weeks of April, the *‘toque final’*, the ‘final touches’ are being put to the roads on the higher ground of Los Guandules and things have gone ‘cold’ in La Ciénaga. As the heavy machinery is moved away, distrust mounts. In the city above the bridge, residents try to glean what information they can. Margot was typical, coming home from her work above the bridge one afternoon with a trophy; *‘una noticia que ustedes no saben’*, ‘a piece of news you don’t know’. But her news is only rumour, fuzzy information like the reception of the barrio television sets. The sense of optimism is similarly increasingly hazy. Wariness prevails; *‘seguimos vigente’*, ‘we are on our guard’, I am told.

Wariness which gives way to a darker sense of foreboding. The once eagerly awaited visits of the engineers, who continue to measure and photograph the cañadas, become a source of aggravation;

<i>'Ay Dios mío, ahora la ansiedad si está</i>	'Oh my God, now we are really well
<i>buena. Nosotros tenemos la sensación si</i>	anxious. We are always with that feeling,
<i>van o no van a resolver el problema.'</i>	will they or will they not resolve the
	problem.'
	(Juliana)

This confusion intensifies, turns to anger and later, on the night it rains, to deep despair.

state surveillance, violence: a growing dis ease

<i>'A los que le conviene la calle es la</i>	'Those for whom the roads are a good thing
<i>policia...corre facil y se mete. Pienso que el</i>	are the police...they can run in easily and
<i>barrio se han arreglado por eso.'</i>	interfere. I think that this is why they have
	mended the barrio.'
	(Magaly)

From the outset the state authorities use the new roads to sweep in. Throughout April the DEA invades at dawn and dusk, rounding up and seizing *'los que no son'*, 'those who are not [involved]'. Anger, terror and resentment are directed at both their invasions and their new techniques. The DEA, like the bulldozers, now have a presence inside the barrio where they reportedly employ 'spies' from amongst the barrio residents. Tales are

told of the feared Doña Leida paid for her information and of those who walk the central arteries disguised as ice cream sellers. On the higher ground of Los Guandules, there is a common perception that the roads are a ‘disaster’.

Those who live furthest from the new constructions within La Ciénaga are, to begin with, more ambivalent.

<i>‘después de arreglar las calles y las</i>	‘after the streets have been fixed and the
<i>jeepetas de la policia pueden entrar y salir</i>	police jeeps can come in and go out, they
<i>van a controlar la delincuencia...’</i>	will control the delinquency...’ (Yonesa)
<i>[interrumpiendo] ‘...y así la otra gente nos</i>	[interrupting] ‘...and that way the other
<i>ve con ojos diferentes.’</i>	people will see us with different eyes.’

(America)

Yonesa and her friends acknowledge that the roads will be used to ‘patrol’ the barrio, but the disadvantages of such surveillance will be outweighed by the hoped for arrests which, in turn, will mean that barrio residents are ‘seen’ differently. It is the act of being seen, with different eyes, which will transform their status, regardless of the unfortunate side effects and mistaken arrests. Magaly is less certain. Her views are those which increasingly predominate throughout the barrio.

<i>‘El tigueraje que había, que decía yo - es</i>	The tigueraje there used to be, what can I
<i>que hay distintas etapas. Antes había</i>	say - it’s that there are distinct stages.

<i>mucha agresividad, atracos. Pero ahora</i>	Before there was a lot of aggression, hold
<i>hay ese flagelo de las drogas. Si Si. Ahora</i>	ups. But now there is that flagellation of
<i>han cogido un área. Esos estaban en</i>	the drugs. Yes, yes. Now they have taken
<i>Gualey entonces se vinieron aquí. Ellos se</i>	[over] an area. Those [who] were in
<i>disputan, tienen peleas con los de aquí.</i>	Gualey have now come here. They argue,
<i>Ahí vienen carros ahí viene todos, es un</i>	have fights with those from here. Cars
<i>tráfico que hay ahí. Los mismos</i>	come in, everyone comes, it's a constant
<i>muchachos del barrio se ponen nerviosos</i>	traffic there. Even the kids from the barrio
<i>cuando se ve eso, toda clase de arma.'</i>	become nervous when they see it, every
	sort of weapon.
 <i>'Ahora está peor en el sentido del tigueraje.</i>	 Now it's worse in terms of <i>tigueraje</i> . At
<i>En los noches el sábado en los colmadones.</i>	nights on Saturday in the bigger <i>colmados</i> .
<i>Después de las doce empiezan con su</i>	After midnight they begin with their
<i>desorden, sus pleitos. Viernes también. Es</i>	disorder, their fights. Fridays as well. The
<i>que en nuestro barrio está desempleado la</i>	thing is Hilary that in our barrio the
<i>mayoría, y Hilaria en nuestro barrio no</i>	majority are unemployed. In our barrio
<i>hay escuela, sólo el Domingo Savio y los de</i>	there isn't any school, only Domingo Savio
<i>mas es pagando. Sin educación no hay</i>	and the rest have to pay. Without
<i>desarrollo, sin educación uno cae en la'</i>	education, there is no development,
<i>trampas. Siempre ud. es un objeto de quien</i>	without education one falls for their tricks.
<i>quiere utilizarle...que se emplea la gente.</i>	You are always an object of any one who

Aquí hay mucha SIDA, mucha tuberculosis, mucha basura. Aquí hay una miseria. 'wants to use you...they have to employ people. Here there is so much AIDS, so much tuberculosis, so much rubbish. Here it's a misery.' (Magaly)

The predicted demise of violence has not happened. The longed for streets have not brought with them either peace or harmony:

'Siempre sigue el mismo tigueraje, uno siempre tiene miedo. Ay caramba ! Ahora está peor - estamos entre tiro y tiro, tiro y tiro.' 'It's always the same *tigueraje*, one is always afraid. Oh God ! Now its worse - we are between shooting and shooting, shooting and shooting.' (America)

The frontline of violence has moved inside the barrio. During the month of April the *play* becomes the site of pitched battles, a game very different from the one intended. New, internal divisions between barrio families are theatrically played out. It is balletic as for four days the participants gather, advance, retreat laughing, advance again with long knives and shots fired into the air. They are well armed after their previous 'engagements' with the DEA.

The *tigueraje* has changed form. The roads have allowed for a literal traffic in drugs.²⁹² A traffic which is assertively denounced. As the discussions turn unprompted again and

²⁹² Compounded in turn by the 'imported crimes' of those being returned from New York, as discussed in chapter one.

again to this discussion of the DEA, the drugs and the tigueraje I am struck not only by the new detail and historical perspective (the delineated stages of the tigueraje), but by the explicit links which are drawn between the troubles in the barrio and a wider economy of bribery and corruption above the bridge. It is tempting to link these new ways of talking to the paths of the barrio: they might be interpreted as having increased the traffic in ideas and interpretations as much as that of drugs. It could just as well be that they know me better or that they themselves understand more fully a phenomenon that was relatively new in my earlier stays in the barrio. Now everyone wants to add detail to the story and there is a clearer analysis on the part of barrio residents as to how the above and below are bound together.

<i>‘Entonces ya tú lo imaginas, la falta de</i>	And so you can already imagine it, the lack
<i>empleo que hay en el país lleva a eso la</i>	of employment which there is in the
<i>violencia, atraces, violaciones. Que pasa -</i>	country leads people to violence, hold ups,
<i>la droga es un ingreso a un grupo, un</i>	rape. What happens - drugs are an income
<i>grupo de arriba. Eso es un ingreso de</i>	for a [particular] group, a group from
<i>millones, entonces que pasa, los pobres de</i>	above. It’s an income of millions, so what
<i>aquí se meten por un chín de eso. Los</i>	happens - the poor here get involved for
<i>pobres muchachos de aquí, se meten a eso,</i>	the smallest cut. The poor kids from here
<i>lo usan pero en el medio de usar eso - por</i>	become mixed up in it. They use it but in
<i>ahí caen, porque para comprarlo necesitan</i>	the process of using it - that’s where they

dinero entonces se ponen a atracar, robar. Consiguen también, muchos son astutos, la venden. Aunque no le da mucha cosa, por lo menos sobreviven. Entonces eso es una de la situaciones que tenemos. Eso se esta grabando (ref. a la grabadora), eso es algo penoso pero hay que decirlo...

fall because to buy they need money so they start to attack, to rob. They make it [money] too, many of them are astute, they sell. Still it doesn't earn them very much but at least they survive. So that is one of the situations we have. This is being taped [a reference to my tape machine], it's a painful thing but you have to talk about it...

[Silín is temporarily interrupted by a discussion as to whether street lighting would make any difference - there is now general agreement that it wouldn't - this violence goes on in broad daylight anyway, the light bulbs will be stolen they laugh.]

Porqué eso está pasando ? Por la misma situación de imagen de eso que yo decía. Qué pasa ? Los militares no ganan nada. Y nosotros sabemos todos que la mayoría de la policía son amigos de los ladrones y repartan lo que roban....

Why is this happening ? For the same reasons, its an image thing, as I've already said. What happens ? The military don't earn a thing. And we all know that the majority of the police are friends of the thieves and share out what they steal...

[another short interruption as to whether things were any different under the dictator Trujillo]

Hay algo y es que, en está cuestión [drogas], ésta institución se mete también a la delincuencia, delincuente, gente que tu sabes que roban, que usan eso [drogas]. Lo ponen ahí, lo arman, le dan sus armas. Todos sabemos que muchísimos interesados prestan, y ellos mismo la hacen. Atracan ellos mismos. Y prestan su arma, compartiendo su beneficio [inaudible]. Luego, los tenenientes, ellos son gente que mandan su policía a la calle a qu? A buscarsela. Los generales, coroneles, eso es así. Tienen que llevar, tienen que hacer eso obliga'o (sic) para no tener problemas con sus superiores. Tienen que llevar su parte. Por eso le cortaron la lengua de Narcisazo. Eso es la verdad. Eso viene desde arriba. Porqué

There's something else and it's that in this business [the drugs], that institution also involve themselves in delinquency, delinquents, you know, the people who rob and use that [drugs]. They put themselves there, they arm them, they lend their own weapons. [Silín emphasising that the police lend their own weapons]. We all know that there are so many interests in those loans and they themselves do it. They themselves do the hold ups. And lend their weapons, sharing out the gains...[the conversation is drowned out by a child's crying]. Later, the lieutenants, those are the people who send their police into the streets, to do what? To be on the make. The generals, the colonels, it's like that. They have to take something, it's expected,

<i>viene desde arriba. Porque nosotros</i> <i>tenemos como historia gobiernos de</i> <i>mandar preso a quien sea en este país por</i> <i>falta de pago. Entonces esas cosas vienen</i> <i>así desde arriba, entonces nada se supone</i> <i>que cuando la cabeza anda mal, el cuerpo</i> <i>entero esta mal. Hmm!’</i>	if they are not to have problems with their superiors. They have to take their bit. That’s why they cut off Narcisazo’s tongue. ²⁹³ That’s the truth. This comes from above. Why does it come from above? Because we have a history of governments who send anyone to prison in this country because they haven’t ‘paid’. So these things come like this from above, well it’s nothing, you can guess that when the head is sick, the whole body will be sick. Hmmm!’ (Silín)
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There does seem to be a clearer vision on the part of those who live in the barrio as to how they are caught up within these wider city conflicts. If government spies and surveillance have moved below the bridge, with the construction of the roads, it would seem that the residents can in turn more clearly articulate the connections between their own predicament and the social and economic ills within the body politic. There is a consensus in La Ciénaga that the real tigueros are officials at the highest levels. Jacqueline argues that the DEA should patrol the custom halls of the airport and the wealthy sectors of the city rather than the barrio.²⁹⁴ There is an escalating resentment that those who

²⁹³ ‘Narcisazo’ was a well known journalist who exposed the links of the drug trade to the highest echelons of

ultimately control and benefit from the growing drug trade are those above the bridge.

The 'poor' involve themselves through necessity but earn very little.

Silín's analysis is one which now resounds through the barrio. It is a story with Hobbesian overtones: the waste of the barrio is linked to an unhealthy body politic. If feelings of optimism are rooted in the new pathways of identity, a sense of citizenship, there are also strong feelings of pessimism based on a growing understanding of what it means to be part of this body politic. The paths give a corrupt state greater access to the barrio. The methods by which the barrio is being cleaned (the construction of roads and cañadas) are also tools to exert state control.

The drug barons of the late twentieth century are able to use the new roads to extract the potential wealth of the newly discovered territory below the bridge. Pertinently Lefebvre reminds us that 'geometrical urban space in Latin America was intimately bound up with a process of extortion and plunder serving the accumulation of wealth in Western Europe; it is almost as though the riches produced were riddled out through the gaps in the grid'.²⁹⁵ The barrio's new streets might be interpreted as an ominous reminder of a past which Balaguer previously manipulated with such detrimental effect for the majority of

the police and military. He 'disappeared' in 1985. The case still has not been resolved although in his election campaign Leonel promised to bring the perpetrators to justice.

²⁹⁴ An analysis later supported by the evidence of a 'secret' report from the DEA which shows that in a single day in Gazcue (upper middle class neighbourhood above the bridge where I used to live) more drugs are seized than in a year in La Ciénaga. During the month of terror I lived through in 1996 only 2 grams of marijuana were seized. (DCND 1996)

²⁹⁵ Lefebvre 1974/91: 152

the city's residents. Balaguer's vast construction projects (discussed in chapter three) celebrated the city's colonial heritage and excluded the majority of citizens. Balaguer also promised hygiene-and-pacification (the two were always run together) for the barrio in the run up to the elections and during the militarisation which marked his last months in power. Situated within this context the new president's infrastructure project no longer seems to symbolise a benign, alternative, urban vision, but rather an attempt to complete the unfinished grid; a grid which represses and holds in place.

Ambiguous responses: optimism, foreboding and the still puzzling protests greet the infrastructure project. The streets which promise cleanliness, order and the possibility of being seen and heard warn too of oppression and control, the darker memories carried in the blood. For the residents of La Ciénaga it is not yet clear whether the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. It is not easy to fathom the president's motives. It is not even clear whether the project will be completed. As the month progresses, the resident's responses are increasingly uncertain.

Whether the presidential intention is benign or more sinister (the evidence for which I discuss below), the paradox is the same. In attempting to change the barrio, the reality of the present must be confronted and is, in the process, changed. The ambiguous responses of the residents are not only an appropriate response to the immediate effects of an (uncertain) project, they are a response to the wider not always foreseen changes which occur. New opportunities, positions and disputes are created by the infrastructure. In

turn, buried tensions are uncovered by the new circumstances. It is as if the infrastructure disturbs the sediment of the barrio. The barrio, like those who live there, can be thought of as a relational matrix. To touch one part of the structure is to set off effects that are not always expected or those intended. Let me illustrate this point more clearly with reference to the president's own visit to the barrio, before moving on to look at how those who had previously interpreted the barrio (COPADEBA, the witch and the priests) respond to this newly shifted ground.

the presidential perspective: a story

The presidential visit to the barrio reveals the full contrariety of the project. A journey into the forbidden city it is intended to symbolise a presidential desire for dialogue and inclusion. It might also express a curiosity to see what lies below the bridge; how it might be brought under control. Those who are more sceptical within the barrio portray Leonel's visit with arresting imagery; he is ironically described as an explorer, forging a path through uncharted terrain. The president, be-capped and with his shirt sleeves rolled up, walked through some of the barrio's central arteries: perhaps intending to make a small, exploratory incision. To his evident surprise he was greeted not only by enthusiastic supporters, but by protesters and placards: the voices demanding a desalojo.

What becomes increasingly clear (although initially, it takes not only the president by surprise) is that neither the preliminary process of taking a look, nor the constructions themselves, can be implemented with detached, technical precision. As the inside turns out in terms of analysis and aspirations (the demand for the *desalojo*), so the outsider who enters the *barrio* becomes tangled in a complex web which is not easily understood.

The unintended and immediate effect of the presidential visit is a heightened state of tension. Within the (also visited) neighbouring *barrio* of La Ciénaga de Guachupita, the course of the construction is immediately altered while within La Ciénaga a violent night of land invasions ensued. In the case of La Ciénaga, land invasions continued in April; during the course of one night, one hundred and fifty men were taken prisoner, acutely embarrassing the president. Leonel Fernández had imagined he could distance himself from such conflicts and the overtly authoritarian responses which had been typical of his predecessor.

World views collide: communication is a different issue when it is no longer a simple process of negotiation between the above and below, the state and the *barrio*. The demands which greet the president are messy; heterogeneous, mobile, conflicting. These are demands which have a physical representation in the shape of the *callejones*. To decide who should have their houses moved or knocked down in order that the street might follow an uninterrupted path is complex and risky. There will be conflict as some lose their homes and others gain. There are also inherent risks in the uncertain terrain

such a discussion would traverse. The issues demand an engaged dialogue, an (inter) penetration of the barrio which the president is not prepared to countenance.²⁹⁶ The visit is a stark reminder of the amorphous nature of that which lies below the bridge and fears of the underneath.

When I visit the neighbouring barrio of La Ciénaga de Guachupita, across the cañada Bonavide, I see the results of the presidential visit. The internal conflicts which were revealed, and the timidity of the presidential engineers, have resulted in constructions which are far from the dreamed of infrastructure project. Cement has been poured through the labyrinthine callejones and the vagabond architecture is frozen into place. '*La medicina es peor que la enfermedad*'; 'the medicine is worse than the disease', Freddy commented, pointing bitterly at the new cañadas which run down the centre of the concrete paths. These drainage canals have not been properly engineered and stagnant water fills them to their brim. Litter and human faeces float, waiting to flood into the homes, with the first rain, through doorways which are now several feet below the cement paths. It is hard not to interpret these 'constructions' as the response of a president who has uncovered something far more inchoate than he had imagined. That which was revealed has again been covered over. For those who live there the concrete has petrified their anxieties and tensions.

²⁹⁶ There is a contrast here with Freddy's methods; Freddy, a self appointed barrio organiser, talks of 'infiltrating' the barrio, engaging the tigueros in the billiard hall and persuading them, see chapter one.

In La Ciénaga it is the lands at the rivers edge and the *play* which were the site of the turbulent invasions. Article 4 of the president's new decree had stipulated that the land at the river's edge should be preserved for environmental reasons. While the decree revoked the general threat of eviction, a 'limited' desalojo of those who surround Los Cocos²⁹⁷ and the river's edge was expressly planned for. In the first of a series of contradictory moves, as the marines departed in September 1996, the armed forces were simultaneously ordered to vigilate the river's edge. By April, these potentially disappearing lands are the newly contested ground.

The invaders (largely rumoured to be working with the armed forces) included speculators from other parts of the city but also those who had once rented in the barrio. Amongst those arrested is Eladio, the husband of Milagros. It was their home I shared in 1993. By 1997 they had moved to another barrio. Like many they had been forced out by the rising rents; a swift response by house owners to the publicity and promise of infrastructure. I knew that life was much harder for Eladio and Milagros in their new barrio. They were without the other family members and networks, key to their survival, which they had built during fifteen years in La Ciénaga. Eladio had hoped to seize the opportunity for a more secure future in La Ciénaga. It was a vain hope and Milagros spent the following days trailing from one prison to another looking for him, then weeks cooking and carrying meals across the city.

²⁹⁷ The area is named after the coconut grove which takes up most of the land. It is privately owned by the wealthy Tavares family.

The streets reveal the schisms within the barrio: those created by the new opportunities and those previously existing but covered over; those themes unquiet but persistent.

These are schisms which the barrio organisers seem unprepared to face up to. As COPADEBA, the witch and the priests debate the issues, the contradictions inherent in their approaches to the barrio are revealed.

On the evening following the April land invasion, COPADEBA met to discuss the implications. For once the arrests were not criticised. COPADEBA members instead began to talk in the language of environmental protectionism, lamenting the ‘hundreds of coconut trees which have been felled’. In another reversal of previous positions, they complained that the state is now providing insufficient vigilance. The promised armed forces which were to replace the marines and guard the banks of the river had not materialised; ‘they patrol from time to time but are not the constant presence which is required’. America, the local COPADEBA leader admonishes those present. Wagging her fore finger backwards and forwards, she warns that COPADEBA will not help those who are guilty get out of prison whoever’s sons or husbands they are.

‘...usted cree que el gobierno va a aceptar que hagamos ranchitos ahí ? No boten su dinero.’ *‘...do you think the government is going to accept us building our shacks there ? Don’t throw your money away.’*

Government policy (previously something to fight against) is now cited as invincible law.

Listening to the discussions I conclude that COPADEBA’s response could only be

inclusive when the threat came from those above the bridge. La Ciénaga is now a barrio visibly divided against itself.

The following morning, a Thursday, the day Margot does not work in the ironmongers, I visit her early. As ever she is impossibly neat, brisk and fresh; her grey ‘good’ hair well combed, her faded cotton print skirt impeccably ironed. I have bought a little sachet of coffee from the nearest *colmado* [corner shop] and, as we wait for it to rise through the percolator, we start to talk about the previous night’s meeting. I asked too about the invasions of the *play* which had taken place in earlier years. It is the same question I have asked every year. This time, something which had been apparently inexplicable before, had elicited only a shrug of the shoulders, could be explained in fascinating detail. I listened mesmerised as the names of the organisers and the histories of the invasions were recounted. Their acts are suddenly important and strongly disparaged;

‘ <i>Toda esa gente tiene su casa - ellos</i>	‘All those people have their own houses -
<i>cogieron eso como vivatura - vendiéndolo</i>	they took it on the make - selling it to other
<i>a otra gente...</i> ’	people...’

A year ago nobody minded. Now the presidential project offers a dream that the *play* might be more than an imagined ground. People want it back: to play on, to trade around, to sell *dulces* and *mabí*, sweets and syrups.

When I ask Margot where the people who once lived on the *play* have gone she tells me in an offhand way ‘*se fueron a otro sitio, otro barrio seguramente*’; ‘they’ve gone

somewhere else, some other barrio probably'. She doesn't know and she doesn't much care. That the barrio itself was once in this position, that all the residents came this way including Margot herself is quietly forgotten. She concentrates now with optimism on what might be gained for those who, like herself, 'own' their homes and have lived there longer.

The stories told and their interpretations seem to depend as ever on where you are standing (and what might be gained). Personal narratives are woven according to what point and to what extent one is caught up within the presidential vision and rhetoric. In April, it was as if everyone was trying to work out where they should move both physically and emotionally. Do they dare hope that things might really change, should they organise in a final concerted effort to reclaim the space of their barrio. Opinions differ, views waver. Conversations are often confused and confusing. The positions adopted on the desalojo no longer seemed inexplicable, rather they encapsulate a very real dilemma.

There are those who do not under any circumstances want to be moved '*despues que nos están limpiando*', 'now they have cleaned us'. A hope that further works are to come. In public most people hold this line, but in private a longing for the desalojo is expressed even, to my amazement, by Margot. Margot, who tells such proud stories of being amongst the first in La Ciénaga, who organises tirelessly, is respected and revered by all,

who tends a tiny garden amidst the mayhem. I turned to Margarita for an explanation.

Everyone she tells me has survived with the idea of getting out somehow;

<i>'Yo entiendo, nada, quizás el desalojo</i>	<i>'As I understand it, never mind, perhaps</i>
<i>nunca se dé pero bueno era mi esperanza</i>	<i>the desalojo will never be but, well, it was</i>
<i>ver gente fuera de ahí - todos. Si quisiera -</i>	<i>my hope to see people out of there -</i>
<i>que lo saquen a todos porque yo espero no</i>	<i>everyone. If only they wanted...that they</i>
<i>volver ahí. Pues sí. Todo el mundo vive</i>	<i>remove everyone because I hope never to</i>
<i>con la esperanza de salir si la situación</i>	<i>return there. That's how it is. Everybody</i>
<i>económica se arregla - la gente trabaja y</i>	<i>lives with the hope of getting out of there if</i>
<i>lucha.'</i>	<i>their economic situation improves - people</i>
	<i>work and struggle.'</i>

Ironically it is Leonel who, through his construction projects (initially at least) strengthens the demands for the desalojo. It is as if the infrastructure on the higher ground of the barrio (the completed streets of Los Guandules) freed expression, the hope that at last they might really be moved. The president is perceived as complying with, as opposed to changing, the urban logic of his predecessors. A president who builds in the barrio is one who might at long last provide the promised apartments. It is an unexpected interpretation of the constructions. One which takes the president himself by surprise.

interpretations: the witch and the priest

The constructions reveal the contradictions inherent in previous interpretations. What I wonder do those who previously had powerful interpretations of the internal logic of the barrio make of this outside turning in. In chapter four I discussed the ways in which creative, new approaches might be drawn out of seeming incoherence. I go in search of the priests and the witch who, temporarily at least, if not turned inside out by events are reeling in their wake. María who could not herself fix the barrio yet recognised the need, thinks the constructions are magnificent. Yet she is disconcerted. This is an incoherence over which she is not sure she is in charge. The priests, whose private interpretations of events are lucid and fascinating, have been temporarily silenced. They are aware that their analysis of the barrio needs no longer fits easily with the desires of La Ciénaga's residents.

*'... el gobierno mag-ní-fi-co. O sea yo
deseo que el sea nuestro gobierno para la
eternidad.'*

*'...a mag-ni-fi-cent government. What can I
say, I hope it will be our government for an
eternity.'*

*'...de ver como la cosa está. Bueno por un
lados (sic) primero - porque eso vamos a
coger parte por parte. El barrio por un*

*'...to see how things are. Well on the one
side first - because this we are going to take
bit by bit - the barrio on the one hand is*

lado lo están ad-mi-ni-strando. Lo estan being well administrated [rolling her tongue
administrando. ' slowly round the word] They are
 administering it.' (María)

María interprets the government's constructions first and foremost as a project of administrative control. It is an interpretation in keeping with her Foucauldian philosophy regarding the relationship between power and knowledge. María, as discussed in chapter four, interpreted my visits and questions as a search for knowledge, the 'power that would enable me to administrate something'. It is also an interpretation which coincides with the views of many others in the barrio as they become increasingly resentful of the government's surveillance. Given María's general political scepticism and her links to the ousted party through her uncle Pérez y Pérez, I am somewhat more surprised by her proclamation that this new administration of the barrio is the product of a 'magnificent' government. I wonder if she thinks the government will really fulfill their promises.

<p><i>'... yo no lo puedo asegurar porque yo simplemente soy un ser del cielo. Entonces yo no sé pero el gobierno tiene muchas buenas posiciones. Sí. <u>Sí</u>. En cambio. Si los ingenieros no son oportunistas lasdrones (sic). El dinero hace lo que el gobierno dice pues luego somos bien pagados por nada. Eso es así. Eso es así. Pero lo único que yo pido a Dios, a' cielo que no me muevan de <u>aquí</u>. No yo no puedo permitir que me muevan de aquí. Por la sencilla razón de que ya yo tengo aquí una varza de años. Este rancho partí desde como el '61 y ya yo aquí conozco todo el barrio.'</i></p>	<p><i>'... I can't make any guarantees because I am only a being of the skies. So I don't know but the government has got some very good positions. Yes <u>Yes</u> ! On the other hand, if the engineers are not opportunistic thieves. If the money does what the government tells it to, well after that we will have been well paid for nothing. That's how it is. That's how it is. But the only thing I ask of God, of the skies is that they don't move me from <u>here</u>. No, not I, I can't allow them to move me from here for the simple reason that I have a whole bunch of years here. This shack dates from '61 and I now know the whole barrio.'</i> (María)</p>
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María too places herself as a supervisor of the works; she is mindful of the possible pitfalls (the potentially thieving engineers) but hopeful that the investment might change the barrio. She mixes her customary elements of the skies and the concrete, yet the content is more hesitant and as we converse I have a growing impression that she is

unsure. María now places emphasis not so much on her own powers, but rather on what she can no longer ‘assure’, she is *only* a being of the skies. Her spatial reach too has diminished, she no longer refers to herself as Queen of the barrio, rather the Queen of the corner. Despite her eulogies I sense that María fears this ‘marvellous’ government challenges her own administration in ways she cannot quite fathom or confront.

I pick up on her comment that she will not ‘permit’ anyone to move her and suggest that since she lives near Los Cocos, on the banks of the cañada, her home may fall into the limited area that is to be evicted. She seems disconcerted; ‘aaaaah’ she replies thoughtfully, as if she has never thought of this before. By the following Tuesday she has her plan worked out: she will get there first;

<p><i>‘...si se mueve el barrio y yo soy la primera que llegué, soy la primera fundadoras (sic) entonces todo lo que llega - claps her hands - son debajo de <u>mí</u>. Son debajo de mí. Enfin yo soy el dominio. Porque ud. llega y yo estoy y recibo a ud.’</i></p>	<p>‘...if they move the barrio and I am the first to arrive [in hushed conspiratorial tones], I am the first founder, then everything (sic) that arrives will be below <u>me</u>. They will be below me. And so I will be in charge. Because you will arrive and I will be there and I will receive you.’</p>
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Yet still there is an underlying feeling that all is not well. Over the weeks her attitudes to the desalojo continue to move like everyone else’s and she can no longer maintain a

coherent line. The once boastfully happy María now suffers from nightmares, nerves and insomnia. She asks me to bring her '*vista-minas*' (sic) 'vitamins'. A couple of months later, complaining about the *basura* [waste] in the barrio, she starts to build a fence around her house. It seems somehow symbolic of a world she once ruled over now closing in around her. Margot tells me not to worry, she is just getting older. I speculate that, although her clients do still come in the same numbers, she feels exposed: her spiritual infrastructure faces concrete competition.

The priests too seem to feel their realm is under siege. Unlike María they perceive the government and their infrastructure to be far from 'magnificent'. The physical constructions and the approach of the presidential engineers amounts in their view to a psychological bulldozing of the residents. The priests argue that a lack of understanding on the part of those above the bridge, as to the ways in which the physical and social fabric of the barrio are connected, '*va a atropellar la psicología de la gente*', 'is going to psychologically knock people down'.

The priests refer angrily to the way in which the works have been implemented. The community constructions in the cañada Bonavide, the result of Freddy's hard won organisational tactics, were flattened to make way for the machines and methods of the government's engineers. The disastrous physical constructions in the neighbouring barrio of La Ciénaga de Guachupita demonstrate the way the government is unable to 'talk' with the barrio residents. The houses that have been left standing in the middle of what should

be streets are interpreted not only as a serious error in terms of urban design, but also as symbolic of the absent communication between the government and residents:

communication which seems to be physically blocked. The priests additionally suggest that the president has some 'occult' plan for the barrio, one he is not yet ready to divulge, which is both symbolically and physically hidden by the irregular streets.

Dispirited and angry, the priests draw on their memories of earlier fiascos and their theoretical readings of other contexts, in their critique of the government. Their doubts have historical justification. In 1986 the previous government of Balaguer, with the support and partnership of the Jesuits, built a school in the nearby barrio of Guachupita. In the process, the government used the pretext of building a school to force entrance into the barrio. In a process described by the priests as 'an eternal river of tears' a *desalojo* then took place. The church watched, helpless, as those who had worked with them to fight the eviction became the last to get apartments. They were allocated unwanted homes at the top of the buildings in an unwanted place.

A process without dialogue, that emphasises asphalt alone, is a hollow process, one which serves only to petrify the social, spatial and psychological 'disorder' of the barrio. It is also a violent process and as such, one which results in aggressive behaviour on the part of those who are subject. Here the priests draw parallels between the processes they see unfolding in the barrio and those documented by Bourdieu in his study of

colonisation in Algeria, *Algeria 1960*.²⁹⁸ Bourdieu argued that the impact of an aggressive, colonising force, attempting to impose a different economic and social order, was one of 'disenchantment'.²⁹⁹ The rhythms of the local population were broken and the absence of economic assurances and psychological security 'produce[d] a disorganisation of conduct' and despair.³⁰⁰ In his analysis, Bourdieu specifically refers to the example of housing suggesting that the modern apartment demands a cultural metamorphosis which, because it cannot be achieved economically (the right furniture cannot be bought for example), similarly leads to a sense of malaise and displacement.³⁰¹

The priests argue that the government's attempts to impose a new urban environment in Santo Domingo's barrios are very similar to the aggressive cultural politics of imperial France, as described by Bourdieu. They reason by analogy that the result for barrio residents will be a similar sense of spatial, social and psychological displacement. While the priests' readings of Bourdieu are themselves open to interpretation and Bourdieu's somewhat bleak analysis, which implicitly assumes a pre-existing harmonious existence, presents its own difficulties, the experience and critique of the priests does accord with events which continue to unfold within the barrio.

²⁹⁸ Bourdieu, 1963/79

²⁹⁹ Bourdieu 1963/79: 26

³⁰⁰ Bourdieu 1963/79: 49

³⁰¹ Bourdieu 1963/79: 85

At the same time, it is hard not to see the priests' interpretation as one rooted in their own particular form of colonisation. Like María, the priests have emphasised matters of the soul; they have made the terrain of emotions their own. This is a mode of analysis which is most evident in their understanding of the constraints on community organisation (see chapter one). They are right. What they have not allowed for is the way in which responses, particularly emotional responses, might change.³⁰² Now, like María, they are watching their administrative hold diminish.

The priests have privileged the voices of the barrio residents whose interpretations and demands now sit uneasily with their own. It becomes increasingly obvious that the church-led movement against the desalojo is as much of an imported dream as the desalojo itself. Many people long for the 'violent break' with the barrio culture which the apartment buildings represent. When Freddy talks about the process of destruction and construction which has taken place in the cañada, he admits that he was disappointed at first but on balance, he welcomes the intervention. The project has progressed in a way that community action alone could never have brought about.

³⁰² Hoggett has suggested in his analysis of the potential uses of Winnicottian psychoanalysis for social policy, that the inclusion of and allowance for change, might be one of the most important contributions the field might make; 'development means finding a truth which is good enough and then moving on when the time comes, whilst holding on to the feeling that what has been arrived at was good and valuable. This is the same for the individual and political movements' (Hoggett 1992: 42, 43). The Dominican experience bears out his case. A representative of the NGO Ciudad Alternativa commented to me that his organisation had failed because they had stopped 'looking over their shoulder' and taking residents' changing opinions into account (see the conclusion).

the month's conclusion

'Algo más de lo mismo': 'Just more of the same'; the priests complain publicly in the press.³⁰³ This is both true and not true. The roads have brought undeniable practical benefits and the act of construction, in both the cañadas and the callejones, despite the way in which it has been undertaken, has encouraged, amongst many who were not previously involved, a public sense of community in the short term. The latter it must be emphasised is something that organisational activities alone failed to construct amongst the majority of La Ciénaga's residents.

At the same time, as the month of April draws to a close, it is increasingly hard not to empathise with the priests' predicament and to see the wisdom of their analysis. Their arguments emphasise the very real structural and social difficulties arising from the constructions. These are difficulties which do indeed intensify in the months that follow. The problem for the priests is that, relying on history and theoretical analysis, they can, to borrow María's words 'see further'. Yet, in emphasising the sacrosanct voice of the residents they have undermined their own possibilities of dialogue as the residents' views have shifted and failed to understand the extent to which the desires of those who live in La Ciénaga have always been shaped by the city above the bridge.

³⁰³ *Hoy*, 11 April, 1997

The priests are of course not the only ones to have a sense of foreboding and to foresee further trouble ahead. On the first day of my return in April 1997 America had warned me in what then seemed to be unnecessarily pessimistic tones of what a ‘strong, resistant’ problem the cañada would prove to be; ‘*vamos a tener un problema fuertes (sic) en la cañada*’; ‘we’re going to have a real problem in the cañada’. Her words proved however to be accurate prophesy.

As the month progresses the attention of barrio residents is once again focused on the cañada. This is partly because the asphalted roads are extended only in two places into La Ciénaga before the machinery moves to other parts of the city whereas the constructions in the cañadas continue. As the cañadas were covered over, some dramatically burst their banks, others began slowly to seep their ‘*aguas negras*’, rivulets which were watched in horror as they began to run daily into people’s homes. As the problems of the tigueraje intensified around the cañadas, the day to day problems of rubbish disposal, that other form of basura, intensified too. Garbage could no longer be tossed into the sealed cañadas and the rubbish trucks proved to be the only city vehicles not willing to use the new roads.

‘*La basura esta ya comiendo a nosotros*’; ‘the rubbish is now eating us’, residents complain referring to both the metaphorical and physical rubbish which mounts inside the barrio and the home.

'tantos rastones (sic) que están comiendo, *'so many rats constantly eating, they walk*
andan en las casas como si son dueños.' *around our houses as if they are the*
owners.'

Fautina's comment is greeted with much laughter and ripostes about quite how well fed and content the rats are. Indeed they are: enormous and brown, and I never become less frightened of them as they scuttle around the lumpy floor of the house where I live. A jest but not a joke. It is ironic that barrio conditions are increasingly insanitary. This was the original excuse for the desalojo yet, as the decree of eviction is over-turned and the grid moves inside the barrio, the environment becomes more intolerable than before. Anxieties intensify: ancient rifts, new divisions, cracks previously unseen. Cement can only temporarily cover over these tensions inherent in the project. And so it proves one night towards the end of April.

One night, towards the end of April, it began to rain. Relentless, heavy, tropical rain, falling after weeks of drought. I woke with a start and a deep, ominous, presentiment. To have lived in La Ciénaga was to know the scene which unfolded. It was a night of feverish activity, of carnivalesque atmosphere. As the storm broke, after weeks of waiting, residents emptied quantities of accumulated rubbish into the fast running waters. In the Bonavide the rubbish couldn't pass between the scaffolding, through the half completed tunnels. The openings blocked, the water pressure built from behind. As the water levels rose, a torrential surge burst over the top of the new construction carrying parts of housing, the cañada, people's possessions.

A disaster created by rubbish. The chief engineer came to the barrio; running, shouting, trying to wake people, get them out of their houses to safety. It was the dark, small hours of the morning; to enter La Ciénaga was brave and kind. But he doesn't understand the barrio and the danger his construction represented in what should have been a season of rain. Had the engineers talked, listened, known anything about the barrio at all, they would have known that everyone waits until the rain to throw their rubbish into the central cañadas so that the currents will sweep it out to the river. Weeks without rain had meant weeks of stored rubbish.

Everyone's homes were flooded. Chairs floated upside down in the mud, sodden mattresses were leant against trees to dry. In the morning, as everyone tries to rinse the cloying filthy black mud off themselves and their homes, a digger and three trucks dump the debris from the cañada in the supposedly precious area of Los Cocos. Crowds gather along the banks and begin to argue over whether this cañada, which had appeared such a marvel, will ever be any good. The engineers are already starting to rebuild the structure by the afternoon but the almost magical hopes which it represented have been washed away. Like everything else in the barrio somehow it now seems not what it appeared, not what was promised. It was foolish even to hope.

In the evening, nearer my home, the cañada Juan Bosco is still being dug out. I find Javier exhausted from digging through the night and most of the day, staring vacantly into the

distance. His house is relatively sturdy and safe and children from some of the houses by the river were moved there in the night. As I approach he loses his temper, shouting angrily at his neighbours who with a broom are trying to move the filthy smelling mud in his direction. Nubia is close to tears and comes to join me. Its useless, her head aches from the smell, the effort, the knowledge their children will now fall sick, the exasperation with a drunk who refuses to get off her threshold. I look down and see that I too am covered in mud. I feel dispirited, utterly helpless in the face of the misery and sense of shock which surrounds me. What can I possibly say to comfort.

I have been back in La Ciénaga less than a month. Optimism has swung to anger and desperation in the intense roller coaster of emotions which in many ways characterises the barrio existence. We all dissimulate, concentrate on projects, people, small hopes which are shattered as if for the first time by rain. Rain a normal every day occurrence in a tropical city.

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Stagnant sewerage: stagnant hope. The infrastructure project has failed for concrete, technical and emotional reasons. By the close of the month, the optimism so palpable on my return to the barrio in 1997 had been eroded, replaced by a widespread disillusionment and sense of defeat: the result of broken promises and unforeseen outcomes.

Within the barrio new problems of the built space and new social divisions have come to the fore. The intractability of old problems has been underlined, as has the impossibility of addressing them with old approaches and methods: those of the rational engineer; the survey, the statistics, the budget; the tools of the nineteenth century inheritance to which I have referred. The cañada remains symbolic of the barrio's difficulties. To tap the cañada has only intensified the problems it represents; very much like the problems lurking within the psyche of the residents (as described by Amparo), that which is repressed returns. The problems of the barrio have been only temporarily solved: they re-emerge and take new form, very much like the urban problems found the world over, the central problematic of this thesis, as described in the introduction.

Without the longed for streets and a solution to the problems of the cañada, the residents feel abject, their emotions and sense of identity remain fragile. The infrastructure is needed, yet for the urban planner to map the barrio is for a stranger to map another's soul. As the previous chapter showed, to address the emotions in isolation, while suggestive of alternative approaches that might be taken in the barrio, is also not a success. What is needed is an alternative set of paths, a different cut or perspective that might reveal a new approach to the built space and the emotions and the way the two are bound together.

Previous chapters have explored the relationship between the built space and the emotions and argued for the importance of including these two variables if the barrio is to

be differently understood and its problems addressed in a meaningful way. In the following chapter I consider what lessons can be taken from this inquiry. In the months beyond April, in which I remained in the barrio, I continued to work with the groups and individuals, questioning their own responses to the barrio's problems. We looked directly at one, small, but increasingly pressing, aspect of the barrio's problems, one which brings together issues of the built space and the emotions: that of basura, physical waste.

difficulties I referred to in the introduction: those lurking and re-emerging problems that face millions of urban dwellers world wide.

Traditional methods and approaches are inadequate. The infrastructure project has failed. Whilst the limitations of these approaches and projects might have been predicted from the initial hypotheses delineated in my introduction and, more importantly, from the stories told by those who live within the barrio, it is perhaps less easy to discern an alternative set of tools, a different starting point.

Earlier chapters have emphasised the importance of issues not previously on the policy maker's map, and the inter-connected and mobile nature of these ideas. There are aspects of the way the barrio is lived, (for example, the way the place is regarded and how friendships are formed), that are in contrast to the notions held above the bridge. These are ways of living that borrow from and are closely intertwined with the above yet, maintain their own particular and not always easily defined characteristics. It is the slippery, liminal nature of these differences which make them so easily elided; they are not part of our 'common sense'. To exclude that which seems at first not to fit, to silence the uncomfortable detail is however not only to construct a barrio which is distanced from reality to the extent that the proposed solutions can never be successful. It is to occlude I suggest, the factors which might be the critical foundation to an alternative approach.

The stories told have not made this alternative approach seem any more simple indeed, the shifting nature of the stories is a not insignificant difficulty. Yet, the picture which accretes is not haphazard. There are core, unmoving (if previously undiscerned) problems which illustrate the contradictions within current policy approaches; how for example can residents form a community organisation to change a place which they must dissimulate in order to survive ? There are also issues which constantly recur, indicating the priority needs from the barrio perspective.

Waste is an example: a pressing and central theme in the stories of those who live in La Ciénaga, it brings together many of the social, emotional and structural issues of the barrio. In this chapter I want to draw out the practical implications of the stories and ideas of previous chapters in order to consider how the issue of waste might be addressed within the barrio. I am asking how the different aspects of the barrio which have emerged, this denser, more textured story, might be used in practice. I am also asking how the method of storytelling might contribute to a new set of tools.

My starting point is the need for a new perspective on waste itself. Before returning to the stories of the barrio, I therefore re-visit the theoretical writings which have informed my work. I return to this theory in order to make waste a site of interest, a matter which excites the imagination. This leads to the formulation of new questions regarding the barrio's difficulties, the tools which enable both me and those who live in the barrio to take a new look at the problem.

‘Dirt’ Freud stated, ‘is matter in the wrong place.’³⁰⁵ Freud’s work suggests that what is dirt or rubbish is not a state or a quality in itself. Definitions are rather an issue of control, of keeping things within their boundaries and defining what is ‘civilized’.³⁰⁶

Freud’s ideas are pertinent for two reasons. Firstly, they bring to mind Balaguer’s classification of La Ciénaga as a place of disease, unfit for human habitation. The definition enabled the former president to distance the barrio in the minds of the city residents. La Ciénaga thus became a barrio that had no rightful place within the city, a place that should be bulldozed. Secondly, and explicitly, they illustrate the ways in which definitions are unfixed, changed according to political expedience and over time.³⁰⁷ Smells for example, once considered the norm have, since the nineteenth century become linked to ideas of cleanliness and aspirations, which are often class specific.³⁰⁸ Freud’s writings serve as a reminder to look behind the definitions of rubbish, asking who is placing the boundaries on what is acceptable, thus defining the ‘above’ and ‘below’, and to what ends.

³⁰⁵ Freud quoted in Schoenwald 1973: 673

³⁰⁶ Freud 1930/91: 281

³⁰⁷ Freud 1930/91: 282

³⁰⁸ Illich 1986: 59. This is a point also discussed in the work of Stallybrass and White, who draw on Freud (1986: 139-140).

Anthropologist Mary Douglas' pathbreaking study of the cultural and social meaning of dirt builds on the social aspects of Freud's writings.³⁰⁹ Three central ideas can be elucidated from her work. They have provided a context for this chapter and a framework within which I have been able to place the discussions on basura within the barrio. Firstly, Douglas emphasises the way dirt is a root metaphor in any society, carrying ideas and implications beyond the matter itself.³¹⁰ There are parallels here with for example, the function of the cañada within the barrio and the ways that waste is used as a metaphor within barrio stories.

Secondly, Douglas explores the relationship between ideas of waste and classificatory systems. Like Freud, she sees dirt as 'essentially disorder'.³¹¹ To look closely at issues of waste is therefore to explore the systems of a society and the way in which particular cultures attempt to demarcate and separate themselves from often uncomfortable issues. Parallels can be drawn here with my earlier discussions on the grid (often used by those above the bridge as a means to demarcate and separate) and the matrix (an arrangement in which contagion between different areas is possible and celebrated). Douglas asserts that an individual's or a society's reaction to dirt will depend on their ability to deal with

³⁰⁹ Haraway, Kristeva and Stallybrass are amongst those whose work I have used, who acknowledge their debt to Douglas, and in turn refer to Freud.

³¹⁰ Douglas 1966/84: 2

³¹¹ Douglas 1966/84: 3

anomaly and flows (a point clearly understood by María and discussed in chapter four).³¹²

Douglas' third idea is, in many ways the most pertinent. She looks at the components of waste and suggests that there are two: the instrumental, that is the concrete or physical matter of waste and the expressive, that is the social and emotional role of waste within a society.³¹³ Thus, building on the work of Douglas, waste itself can be reconceived as an issue of the physical/built space and of the emotions.

Kristeva, drawing on the 'fundamental work of Mary Douglas', develops ideas on the physical/emotional role of waste, in her essay on abjection.³¹⁴ Waste is at once a physical 'something' which is rejected yet never truly apart, and a *feeling*. In words which seem to directly paraphrase María's descriptions of the green envy of the emotions (chapter four) and to allude to discussions of the uncanny and the uneasy presence of vagabond architecture (chapters one and two), Kristeva describes abjection; 'a terror that dissembles, a hatred that smiles...a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you.'³¹⁵ Abjection which can start from feelings of public horror (dissimulation of one's

³¹² Douglas 1966/84: 5

³¹³ Douglas 1996/84: 3, 160

³¹⁴ Kristeva 1980/82: 65

³¹⁵ Kristeva 1980/82: 4

surroundings) becomes an internal condition of private suffering.³¹⁶ Kristeva intimates that the solution is to seek a life based not on exclusion, but rather one based on free flowing desire and a reassertion of what is wanted (basic desires).³¹⁷ Again, there are parallels here with María's philosophy and her methods for healing the soul.

My own imagination is provoked by the idea that the solution to the barrio's physical waste might similarly be to concentrate on flows, on methods that unblock the residents' creativity, as well as their cañadas. The explicit suggestion in the work of Freud, Douglas and Kristeva, is that there is no essential thing as 'dirt', rather dirt is an attribution. Their work thus accentuates the importance of examining the social, political and institutional mechanisms by which classification and rejection takes place. The emphasis in the work of both Douglas and Kristeva on the physical and emotional qualities of dirt and, in Kristeva's work in particular, the emphasis on the difficulty of addressing an issue in which sentiments of emotional rejection are so closely caught up, echoes issues that have already been articulated within the barrio. It is thus with these emphases and ideas in mind that I return to the concrete problem: how to solve the difficulties caused by the accumulation of physical waste within the barrio.

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³¹⁶ Kristeva 1980/82: 140. Private suffering is defined by Kristeva as manifesting itself in the form of dizziness and headaches. Interestingly these are the health complaints most discussed by the women of the barrio (Cottam 1993).

When I returned to the barrio in 1997 I asked for stories about rubbish. This was the first time I had asked the groups and individuals I worked with to directly address a predetermined question. These stories form the first part of this chapter; '*Mi casa fué un basurero...*', 'My house was a rubbish tip...' America tells me, '*Donde la mía ahí fué una laguna...*', 'Where mine is used to be a lake...' Yonesa chimes in. As the discussion develops people became proud of their ingenuity. Their stories began to unsettle what might be defined as waste and, as ever, revealed the heterogeneity of barrio views.

Simultaneously, I tried another path. Continuing my excavations of the wider city discussed in chapter three, I made my own archaeological exploration of the city's institutions involved in waste. This is a path which leads me to the head of the multi-national who currently operate the city cleaning contract, and to the head of the Consejo Nacional de Drogas, (DCND, the National Drug Council).³¹⁸ The two institutions I discover continue to be intertwined in the mind. It leads too to the head of the Ayuntamiento (city council), the CAASD (Santo Domingo water and sewerage parastatal) and to the upper echelons of the governing party, the PLD.³¹⁹

³¹⁷ Kristeva 1980/82: 6 There are of course parallels here with my earlier discussions on the importance of the women's dreams and their basic desires (see chapter two).

³¹⁸ CND in institutional chaos with DCND. Funded by DEA. When I ask above the bridge about the DEA, everyone tells me that the DEA is an American organisation, as if I have made some mistake about someone's identity. The DEA officially does not exist. In the barrio the CND and the DCND are not distinguished between and referred to as the DEA.

³¹⁹ I refer here and in what follows to the Síndico of the Ayuntamiento, the elected syndicate which govern the city council since almost all positions are either elected or indirect political appointments. At the time of research and writing the Síndico was governed by the PRD while the governing party moved from the

This is a path through long, littered corridors painted in institutional green. In the Ayuntamiento I have to pick my way over and between the traders of the skin, the hangers on, the city council's own police security forces. Guerilla tactics are necessary to get into offices where the police carefully position themselves in front of fans and somnolent employees yawn behind bare desks, '*policía subelo un chin*', 'policeman turn it [the fan] up a bit'. Is it worse to feel the weight of dispiritedness which invades the Ayuntamiento offices or the cold fear as I am led two floors below the ground in the DCND by a man who rattles gold bracelets on fat fingers while images of Narcisazo and the other disappeared run before my eyes. Only a block away the plush air conditioned offices of the central bank where I made futile incursions in the hunt for national budgets seem a surreal place.

These offices are part of a physical journey which ends far to the north of the city in Guaricano, the site of the *vertedero* [tip] known as Duquesa. Guaricano is the destination of both the city's rubbish and those who have been bulldozed out of their homes. Neither process has gone according to plan. Residents complain that they are without streets and 'overwhelmed by so much rubbish which threatens our health',³²⁰ while the Ayuntamiento report that the worsening access roads prevent the rubbish trucks from

PRSC (President Balaguer) to the PLD (President Leonel Fernández) ie. central government and the Ayuntamiento were in political opposition to each other throughout the five year period covered.

³²⁰ Residents quoted in *Listín Diario* 21.10.88

entering.³²¹ The open caste site is a desolate wasteland; trucks have tipped where they like leaving a vast area three and a half metres deep in basura. In an attempt to stop this random tipping access roads have been militarised accentuating the way the area and the issue is a battlefield. As newspaper headlines continue to scream about 'barrios drowning in rubbish'³²² and Santo Domingo becoming '*un solo vertedero*', 'just one big tip',³²³ Guaricano seems a physical manifestation of the deadlock I find within the institutions.

In the third part of the chapter I describe the solution which emerged from the barrio. This solution, which none of us could have imagined at the outset, is in many ways the end of my storying path. It draws on the altered perspectives and growing confidence that have occurred, over several years, through the long hours of talking. The solution, taken up enthusiastically by both the city government and the multi-national waste company responsible for Santo Domingo's waste services is a new convergence of 'senses'.

³²¹ Espinal quoted in *El Siglo*, 27.08.96

³²² *El Siglo* 14.05.96

³²³ *Ultima Hora* 24.05.96

‘TREMENDOUS RUBBISH’: THE (RE)SOURCE OF WASTE

In La Ciénaga waste is a resource; the material from which homes can be constructed, enterprises built and stories woven. *‘Un barrio se hace así mismo, nosotros.’* ‘A barrio is made like this, by us,’ Juanita tells me explaining the process. Pineapple peelings, paper and banana skins are used to fill in the spaces, make the *ciénaga*, [marsh] inhabitable. These stories are the creation myths, the foundation stories of the barrio. They are also stories about alternative ways of living indeed, of making a living. Basura, like most things in the barrio, is not what it first seems.

La Ciénaga is a place made out of rubbish. The constant process of sorting and using ‘clean’ rubbish as *‘relleno’*, ‘filling’ is a practice which creates urban living space out of places which have been abandoned or cast off. As Jaqueline points out, in a curious inversion of spatial logic, it is actually the rubbish which makes space in the barrio.

<i>‘Los vecinos tiran - entran y tiran por arriba. Hace tres semanas tengo un monton ahí. Yo peleo. Yo les digo tantas cosas pero nada - vienen en la noche, pah ! y le tiro. Si porque ahí en ese patio, estaba vacío pero ahora le van a construir. Porque en construir la casa se sale de la basura y van a construir una p’alla y otra</i>	<i>‘The neighbours chuck it - they come and chuck it on top. Three weeks ago I had a mountain there. I fight. I say all sorts of things but nothing - they come at night, pah! and they chuck it. Yeah because in that patio, it was empty, but now they’re going to build. You see in building the house, you escape from the rubbish and</i>
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p'acá. Así como yo te digo, en los patios, construyéndose y eso estará resuelto.' they're going to build one there and another there. Like that, as I told you, building in the patios, this thing is solved.'

(Jaqueline)

Relleno can be used to create patios and to support the foundation of houses. The process furthermore ensures the cleanliness of the barrio by removing the places where unwanted types of rubbish would otherwise be tipped.

This use of rubbish, which overturns the meaning of waste, depends on a delicate symbiosis between the spaces of the barrio, the people and their rubbish. In the early 1980s, the dramatic increase in the barrio's population density (discussed in the introduction) resulted in both higher quantities of locally produced rubbish and less open spaces to fill. Not all of La Ciénaga's residents are confident that the building of more homes is the solution. Amparo and Silín for example complain vociferously that the entire barrio is in danger of becoming '*un inmenso vertedero*', 'an immense rubbish tip', whilst the behaviour of fellow residents is often as much of an irritant as the rubbish itself;

'..come un guineo y lo tire. Se funciona así con tanta gente - eh ? ' [they] eat a banana and chuck it. Do things work like that with so many people - eh?' (Silín)

'Y había donde tirar la basura, ahora no ! And there was once somewhere to throw

No hay terreno vacío. Tu encuentras casa, casa, casa. Son pocas las zonas que están desocupado para la basura' the rubbish, now there isn't! There is no empty land. You find house, house, house, house. There are few unoccupied areas for the rubbish.' (Amparo)

Amparo's words, in particular her description of the way in which the rubbish 'has used up the spaces that were available', leave me with an image of the rubbish competing for space, almost on equal terms with the people who try to live in La Ciénaga.

Detritus produced in other parts of the city is similarly viewed as both a potential resource and a hazard. Whilst there is resentment at the quantities of rubbish carried into La Ciénaga in the cañadas which drain the waste of other barrios, there is also a sense of opportunity. Much of that which is discarded above the bridge is mined and rescued by the barrio residents: the rancid mattress I sleep on, the clothes that are worn; Jaqueline's house which is a patchwork of the offcuts of the homes of others; the oil drums which are slowly collected and unraveled by Rafaela, used to build her walls.

One afternoon, as she gradually recovered from a botched operation Rafaela, now well enough to sit under her guava tree and shout instructions for the illegal re-connection of her electricity supply, told me about the slow process of building her house. In 1988, 'fed up with money going out of the house as fast as it entered', she went out to work, to wash and to iron and save her '*cellitos*', 'cents'. The dream was a home of her own, no longer the need to pay rent. Once RD\$ 700 (US\$ 47.00) had been saved to buy the plot,

a further RD\$ 1,500 (US\$ 100) had to be found for the wooden frame. Over the months that followed her family collected five gallon oil tins from other areas of the city, sticking them together to form the walls. In the final stage a couple of years later, they bought twenty lorry loads of relleno (about RD\$ 125 per load) to form the floor. No longer wading around in mud, she, her husband and seven children have a home.

To look beneath the seams is to understand the extent to which one person's rubbish is not only another person's home, but their livelihood. Rubbish, as Javier points out, is the most plentiful resource of the barrio;

<i>'... y eso es lo que mas hay aquí - basura -</i>	<i>'...and that's the thing we have most of</i>
<i>y el rebusco dentro de la basura...para</i>	<i>here - rubbish - and the searching in the</i>
<i>cambio de vida es decir económica.'</i>	<i>rubbish...for a change of life, that's to say</i>
	<i>an economic change.'</i> (Javier)

waste: a source of income

Mario is one of several people in the barrio who makes his living out of an informal rubbish collection service. He was seriously injured by falling debris on the construction site of a new tourist complex where he was working and, as Dominican law allows, was summarily dismissed by his employers. In desperation he turned to rubbish collection, *'...el hambre, el hambre, el hambre y pa' no robar, ni matar, ni hacer cosas malas,*

vamos a botar basura.’ ‘...hunger, hunger, hunger and so as not to rob, nor kill, nor do evil things, let’s throw out the rubbish’, he explained to me. Playing *zan* [the local lottery] with ‘God showing the way’, Mario acquired his first *carretilla*, the small cart he pushes from door to door collecting the rubbish.

<p><i>‘Yo no tenía nada. Usted vé ? Yo no tenía nada. Y yo compré una casa. Un rancho. De eso mismo conseguí mi esposa y la tengo. De eso mismo he conseguido los trastes que tengo y todo . Yo lo tengo de todos estos chances porque yo he conseguido aquí una buena suerte y tambien una mala suerte. Porque el Coronel Manzueta me tuvo ahí encerrado, ahí tres días en Guachupita preso. Tres días preso. Porqué? Porque no querían que botara basura. Entonces digo bueno yo voy, yo me voy a...Con qué voy a comer? Yo no robo. Yo no mato. Qué voy hacer? No sé de letras. Yo no sé de nada. Qué hago?’</i></p>	<p>‘ I didn’t have a thing. You see ? I didn’t have a thing. And I bought a house. A shack. From that too [i.e. the rubbish] I found my wife and I have her. From that as well I’ve found the <i>trastes</i> I have and everything. I have everything from those chances, because I’ve found here good luck and bad luck. Because the Colonel Manzueta had me there incarcerated, three days in Guachupita [the neighbouring barrio] in prison. Three days in prison. Why ? Because he didn’t want me to throw out the rubbish. So I say well, I’m going, I’m going to... (tails off). What am I going to eat from ? I don’t rob. I don’t kill. What am I going to do? I don’t know how</p>
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to read. I don't know about anything.

What will I do ? (Mario)

The price Mario charges for his collection service is unfixed, anywhere between RD\$ 10 and 5 (approximately US \$ 0.60) per bag. While there are some potential clients he can't reach, *'por falta de calle'*, 'for the lack of a street', the vagabond architecture keeping him out, he is not short of customers; *'todo el mundo llamandome, llamandome'*, 'everyone calling me, calling me'. He follows these clients carefully; those who don't throw anything out today are sure to throw something out tomorrow. It is a form of rubbish policing and as we talk, Mario turns to America beside us, who turns out to be one of his customers, reminding her it is now three days since she has thrown out her rubbish. It is clear that personal service is the way he keeps his customers, fending off competition from others in the barrio such as Cuca the Crazy who are already in the business. His willingness to *'cogerlo fiao'*, 'loan' his services, fits in with the peaks and troughs of his clients' incomes and ensures their loyalty.

From Mario's perspective there could never be enough rubbish and profits are high. Getting into his stride, he celebrated the wonders of the *'tremenda basura'*, 'tremendous rubbish' and his earnings which can be as high as RD\$ 300 (US\$ 20) a day, six times higher than the national minimum wage.³²⁴ There is a price to be paid in terms of pride

³²⁴ Resolución # 3/95, *Tarifas de Salarios Minimos Nacionales*, Sec. Estado de Trabajo, Santo Domingo, 1996

illustrated by his unprovoked and rather too boastful assertions that he is not ashamed; '*a mi no me da verguenza recoger basura*', 'it doesn't make me ashamed to throw out the rubbish'. There is also the problem of worms and bugs (about which Mario is dismissive) and the rather more hazardous problem of those who dispose of drugs and equipment.

The greatest danger Mario faces seems to be the direct result of his own success. When I first met him, he made an intriguing reference to his arrest by the military. It appeared that he had in some way 'crossed' the city's power structures and I wondered whether it was this that led to his constant assertion that '*me van a matar*', 'they're going to kill me'. In the presence of Margot and America, I tried one Sunday afternoon to untangle the story of Mario's nights in prison. It was not easy: even the simplest of questions as to how long he has been collecting rubbish and when the trouble began were met with the refrain '*...yo no puedo robar, yo no puedo matar...*', '...I can't rob, I can't kill...'. Mario himself seems wasted;

<i>'No sé si yo entendí bien -lo que ellos</i>	'I don't know if I've understood you right -
<i>estaban tratando de hacer fué controlar su</i>	what they were trying to do is control your
<i>empresa?'</i>	business ?' (hc)
<i>'Sí'</i>	'Yes' (Mario)
<i>'Pero quiénes?'</i>	'But who?' (hc)
<i>'El Col. Manzueta'</i>	'Colonel Manzueta' (Margot)
<i>'Ahora es Capitán, no General!'</i>	'He's a Captain now. No a General !'

(Mario proudly)

Pero porqué le metieron ud. preso?

‘But why did they put you in prison ?’

(hc)

Bueno, porqué no querían que yo botara

‘Well, because they didn’t want me to

basura. Yo no se porqué, no se porqué. En

throw out the rubbish. I don’t know why,

este barrio aquí. Yo nunca pa’ robar mejor

don’t know why. In this barrio here. So

boto basura. No robo, no mato ...’

that I never have to rob I throw out

rubbish. I don’t rob, I don’t kill...’

(Mario)

‘Ayudame alguien!’

‘Help me out someone !’ (hc laughing)

I appeal to Margot and America for help as the chorus returns. It appears that Mario was arrested for emptying his cart on the central avenida, yet the involvement of Manzueta a relatively powerful military figure who is not local, remains a mystery.

It is not only the military who threaten Mario. He has also been subject to the threats and allegations of employees of the Ayuntamiento [city council] who live in the barrio. Their envy leads to accusations that he has been ‘bewitching’ the rubbish trucks so that they no longer come to collect the rubbish; *‘Usted esta hechando bainas a los camiones para que no vengan’*; ‘You are putting ‘things’ on those trucks so they don’t come’.

Mario relates how he has been visited every day by a man from the Ayuntamiento; ‘he had me up to here’, indicating his neck. Again, it isn’t clear how this dispute has been

resolved since Mario continues to collect rubbish. What is clear is that his entrepreneurial approach has made him powerful enemies.

As time passes it is also increasingly clear that what can on the surface look like an unpleasant but profitable business is subject to other unseen hazards and economic uncertainties. Every time I bump into Mario he presses me to come and see the home and wife he is so proud of. It is a couple of months later by the time I put my head round the door at a time that he is in and I find his fortunes have changed;

<i>'...no había nada que hacer. Aquí se metió</i>	<i>'...there wasn't anything I could do. We</i>
<i>un aguacero, un aguacero, un aguacero</i>	<i>had downpour after downpour after</i>
<i>aquí y digo pero aquí no hay nada que</i>	<i>downpour here and I tell you here there is</i>
<i>hacer. Qué voy hacer? No puedo trabajar,</i>	<i>nothing that can be done. What am I going</i>
<i>no puedo comer o cocinar...'</i>	<i>to do? I can't work, I can't eat or cook...'</i>

(Mario)

The rains which carried away the new cañada Bonavide prevented Mario from working and with no income he was forced to sell his cart to eat. Now renting a cart for RD\$ 200 a day from a man in Los Guandules, a significant swathe has been cut into his earnings. The hope of ever saving the RD\$ 1,000 he will need for a new cart is distant. *'Pues si madre eso es mi tan sabiduría sobre la basura'*, 'Well yes mother that is the much wisdom I have about rubbish', he concludes rather sadly, remembering half mockingly my previous admiration for his strategy.

As Mario emphasises rubbish collection is a survival strategy, based not on wisdom, but on hunger. Less than half of the economically active population who live in the barrio (forty seven percent) are recorded as having some form of stable employment.³²⁵

Opportunities for employment in the formal sector are few and the majority of those who are formally employed are in occupations related in some way or other to the business of 'cleanliness'. For men the booming demand above the bridge for private security guards provides the main source of employment. Ironically, as fears grow at rising levels of violence, those below the bridge are perceived as both the 'wasters' and those who can help guard against the problem. For women there are some formal sector jobs available as street sweepers. The majority of women however have informal jobs as domestics cleaning the houses of others, a job which is perceived to be humiliating and therefore hated.³²⁶

Adela and Carmen are two of the women of La Ciénaga who are employed as street sweepers by the Ayuntamiento.. It is not a job they like;

'...es difícil trabajar por el Ayuntamiento, *'...it's hard to work for the Ayuntamiento,*

³²⁵ Ciudadana Alternativa 1998: 29. In this study, Tejada points out the potentially misleading nature of this statistic since those registered as economically active in stable employment can include activities such as those as the shoe shine 'boys', activities which offer an extremely low if 'stable' income and hide a more severe level of unemployment. All the statistics quoted come from a preliminary presentation of this study.

³²⁶ See chapter two for Margarita's description of the shame involved in domestic work. The inhumane way many employers treat their employees causes some women such as Amparo to evade admitting that this is the work they do. The subject provides a theme for Caribbean literature, see for example Orlando Patterson's description of Dinah's relationship with her employer Mrs. Watkins (1964/89). It should be emphasised however that the occupational hazards are real and extend beyond injured pride. During my earlier research in 1993 women described such things as chemical burns and acute back trouble (Cottam 1993; 63).

aguantar el sol, la lluvia, los insultos

to bear the sun, the rain, the insults’.

(Adela)

Adela explains how degrading she found her work, treated as dirt by those who lived and worked in the streets she swept, people who would not even give her a glass of water as she walked under the midday sun.

Street sweeping, like most public sector jobs, is also not a form of employment that pays a survival wage. When I found Carmen at home behind piles of washing, she candidly explained to me that this was her ‘*día de trabajo*’, ‘day of work’. The ‘work day’ is unofficially assigned to those who remain in public sector employment by their managers, a common practice which recognises the need for additional income generating activities.

Adela too supplements her income with informal cleaning activities, taking washing into her home. She has also found a strategy to evade sweeping the streets. Claiming she developed stomach ulcers from her work, she has managed to enroll for a government pension under the category of ‘occupational hazards’. She receives a monthly benefit of RD\$ 1,300, equivalent to her former salary. María too I eventually discover supports her ‘cleaning’ of houses with both the *‘fuerza indigena’*, ‘indigenous forces’, and a government stipend. I never like to pry too closely into how she qualifies for this.

In an economy where employment has little direct relationship with a source of income, it is not only the categories of formal and informal which fall apart, but the concept of ‘work’ itself. Douglas emphasised the way in which explorations of waste carry wider

implications. In the case of La Ciénaga, discussions of waste reveal the fascinating complexity of the urban economy. The story which is told about the city's finances is, like that told about the city's built spaces explored in chapter three, a story with mythical foundations. I found Adela and María to be amongst the many in La Ciénaga who carry an identity card which entitles them to regular back door payments; they are part of a complex project of political favours and 'pacification'. Public sector agreements signed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during the 1980s have (as discussed in the introduction), mandated the downsizing of the labour force and the freezing of salaries. Public accounts show compliance in readiness for future rounds of negotiation with the IMF. Political stability however depends on alternative methods of support to the barrios. The stipends and identity cards of the rubbish collectors reveal the deceptions in the story the city and national government tell their multi-national creditors.

To mine the stories of waste in La Ciénaga is again to reveal a 'deception of coherence' in the narrative of those above the bridge. A story is told of a crisis in accumulation. It serves to justify the lack of services provided to the barrio; alternative solutions must be found in a city which cannot fund services for all its inhabitants. Yet the institutions are apparently able to find the necessary resources to support those they once employed and those they perceive might take to the streets in violent protest. I continue to follow these stories and this path through the city institutions involved in waste, in the next section.

At the barrio level, waste itself is a category that breaks down; all that is rubbish is not waste, rather it is the raw material from which the barrio, homes and livelihoods are constructed. In part the stuff of dreams, it remains too a source of dis-ease. The connection to dirt is never far away; the undesirable social elements who collect by the litter choked cañadas are a constant reminder that the barrio is both a human and physical cloaca of the city. It is both constructed as such in the city's rhetoric and physically through the accumulation of detritus brought by the cañadas which originate in other barrios and city sectors. The *vertederos* [tips] spontaneously combust into flames and violence, a reminder of the fragility of existence, of the urgent need for a waste collection service.

THE WASTE CONTRACT

In 1991 Santo Domingo's rubbish services were contracted out to a private company. Firstly, and without success, to Emlurb, a national company and then, more controversially and equally unsuccessfully, to a British company Attwoods, owned by Dennis Thatcher. During the period in which this thesis was researched, Dixi Dominicana, a subsidiary of the multi-national waste corporation BFI, were responsible for the collection of the city's domestic waste.

In this section I trace the complicated political history of this contract, sifting through newspaper articles, political commentary and academic treatises. In 1997 I attempted to plot the course of Santo Domingo's waste collection, from the home to the city tip. In the process, as noted above, I visited the institutions involved and interviewed the managers and key players (see Annexe A: On Methodology) . As I mined the sources and the stories, and delved within the institutions, the more evident the fictitious nature of the official contract story became. Just as an archaeological process uncovered the myths behind the city's official story (see chapter three), so a similar course of inquiry based around a particular service reveals the fictitious nature of the waste contract: a story of privatisation.

The case for privatisation and contracts was made by Corporán, a flamboyant television personality, at that time, the political head of the Ayuntamiento (the city government). Emotive arguments were made about the terrifying dangers Santo Domingo's residents faced from cholera on the one hand and the need to make the city presentable for the forthcoming celebrations of the quincentenary of Columbus' invasion on the other. This colourful rhetoric echoed similar arguments being put forward by President Balaguer for the desalojo of La Ciénaga. The privatisation of waste collection was an integral part of the urban vision described in chapter three; the imperative to 'clean' the city of all undesirable elements, a campaign to move the poor and the waste to Guaricano, the site of the city dump. The contract can also be seen as central to economic structural change (the border war discussed in earlier chapters).

A political furore erupted with the contracting of Attwoods. The contractual process was widely perceived to be a further manifestation of the government's clientelist politics (discussed in chapter three), dressed up in the language of a modern contractual process.³²⁷ The newspaper *Hoy* was amongst those who kept up steady pressure for transparency and the publication of the contract demanding to know whether the 'invisible' contract could be found in London or existed at all.³²⁸ The criteria for the company's selection was universally challenged. Some alleged that the sums involved (a monthly contract of RD\$ 120 million, approximately US\$ 10 million per annum) would have allowed the Ayuntamiento to provide an efficient service. The sum represents sixty percent of the Ayuntamiento's total income. Others, while recognising that the 'financial, technical and administrative incapacity of the municipality' had obliged the central government to take action' questioned the legality of the 'pseudo privatisation'.³²⁹

Anger was simultaneously expressed at the chaotic institutional arrangements established for managing the contract. The central government remained in charge of the budget and the contractual process, while the Ayuntamiento were responsible for supervising and 'vigilating' the day to day operations of the company.³³⁰ Old political squabbles between

³²⁷ Vargas *ibid.* 1996; 13

³²⁸ *Hoy* 16.03.92

³²⁹ Luis Vargas 1996; 34 and *El Siglo* 25.03.92

³³⁰ One of Balaguer's final presidential acts (decree 300-96) was to allow the *cabildo*, (the political head of the Ayuntamiento) to 'vigilate and supervise' the operations of the company.

the central government and the Ayuntamiento, who traditionally and currently are dominated by different political parties, were re-awakened. Urban political battle lines have, since 1991, been drawn around and defined by the business of waste.

As academic and political debates continued over the merits of privatisation and the demarcations of political power, allegations of corruption grew amongst the city residents. The unknown terms of the contract led to accusations that Corporán had lined his pockets. The accusations of the press and intellectuals were repeated in the barrio where Dennis Thatcher, Attwoods and the state were perceived to be extracting a surplus from the Dominican people in a business closely entwined with that other form of rubbish, drugs;

*'Bueno yo diría que después que el
gobierno le daba los 10 millones a la
Attwoods, de ahí p'aca ha venido ese
desorden de la basura. Porque si le dio
esos 10 millones al Ayuntamiento quizás el
Ayuntamiento tuviera otra...'*

‘Well, I would say that after the
government gave the 10 million to
Attwoods, from that point on, we have
had this chaos with the rubbish. Because if
they had given the 10 million to the
Ayuntamiento, perhaps the Ayuntamiento
would be different...’ (Silín)

*'Le dio ese dinero a una compañía que no
están haciendo nada. Son 10 millones
mensual !'*

‘They gave that money to a company that
aren’t doing anything. Its 10 million a
month!’ (Fautina, the last part emphasised)

with outrage)

'Un grupo de ladrones que pusieron para sacar dinero del país. Un grupo de ladrones y Corporán cuando era síndico.'

'A group of robbers who they put there to take money out of this country. A group of robbers and Corporán when he was the *síndico* [ie. the political head of the Ayuntamiento]' (Juliana)

'Si, "don" Corporan (emphasising with tones of cynicism), hasta dijo por televisión en público que ellos trajeron marijuana, cocaína, y cosas así, vainas. Sí, con nombre y apellido nombró gente. Esos camiones vinieron lleno de drogas fué - por eso que lo utilizaron. Eso se quedaba declarado. Y dónde fueron esos millones? Se robaba la gente, el público. A dónde se fué los camiones, los palos y picos?'

'Yes, "don" Corporan (emphasising what should be a title of respect with tones of cynicism), even said publicly on television that they brought marijuana, cocaine and shit like that. Yes, he named people with first and surnames. Those trucks came full of drugs - that's what they used them for. That was declared. And where did those millions go? They robbed people, the public. Where did the the trucks go, the shovels and spades?' (Silín)

'A dónde se fué todo ese dinero?'

'Where did all that money go?' (Marisol)

'Al bolsillo de Corporán.'

'Into Corporán's pockets.' (Fautina)

'Es un ladrón grande y con traje y corbata.'

'He's a big thief and in a suit and tie.'
(Amparo)

'Sí, esos son los ladrones en este país.

'Yes, those are the thieves in this country.

Siempre.'

Always.' (Silín)

Most damningly, the increasingly hated Attwoods were apparently unable to fulfill their contractual obligations. As rubbish mounted in the streets, the company took out full page articles in the national newspapers to refute accusations that they were a 'non existent' or 'fantasmic' organisation. The hysterical language and Christian imagery used by the company, (claims that they had been taken like 'lambs to the slaughter'), were to no avail.³³¹ In June 1996, in response to mounting urban discontent in all areas of the city, the military took over rubbish collection before the contract (still unseen by the public) was handed to Dixi Dominicana, a subsidiary of the multi-national waste company BFI, registered in Holland.³³²

Dixi have not been able to differentiate themselves from their predecessors in the minds of the public. They use the same premises, vehicles and, rather mystifyingly, five years, much inflation and a devaluation later, have taken on the job at the same contract value of RD\$ 10 million per month. Visiting their offices, it is hard to know whether the continuing public pressure and unpopularity is cause or effect of the atmosphere of tense suspicion which is all pervading. I was constantly watched by faces hidden behind

³³¹ 'Today, notwithstanding our conservative position in the face of so many attacks, we see ourselves to be compelled by circumstances to confront so many lies...they have meant that we cannot remain silent, taken like lambs to the slaughter without confronting and responding to how things have been'. *Hoy* 26.10.92. (my translation)

reflective sunglasses. I felt that I had entered the offices of some highly illicit enterprise. The French company manager Sadoux while charming could not help me with my inquiries; he speaks no Spanish and my French was not sufficiently good to proceed. This was a story which caused much bitter laughter when repeated in the barrio; 'a man who speaks limited Spanish, is it any wonder the services don't work?'. His General Manager, a Dominican named de Lemos was delegated to help.

Juan de Lemos tried hard to turn me away since I had no 'identity papers', eventually agreeing that he would give 'yes' or 'no' answers only, on condition that I took no notes. This initial interview stumbled almost immediately when I raised the issue of La Ciénaga. La Ciénaga is not a barrio that falls under the company's remit. Without a trace of irony de Lemos explained that those trucks which do visit the barrio represent a generous good will gesture on the part of the company, rather than the fulfillment of a contractual obligation. Dixi are contracted only to collect basura from the areas which are 'clearly urban', other areas remain the responsibility of the Ayuntamiento.

While the criteria for defining an area as 'clearly urban' are not known, a map is periodically published in the national newspapers listing those barrios which are still the responsibility of the Ayuntamiento and depicting them in green. Interestingly, La Ciénaga does not appear on the list by this or any other name, neither does it appear to be

³³² See for example the report in *Hoy* entitled; 'More than 600 tons of basura remain uncollected in Santo Domingo every day', 27.03.96. (my translation)

included in the red coloured area that belongs to Dixi. The barrio is invisible within the waste contract, neither the responsibility of the contractor Dixi or the Ayuntamiento. The extent of the invisibility is only further underlined when I raise the issue with Castellanos the engineer in charge of the Ayuntamiento's waste services. With over seventeen years in the job, he predates the contract yet, he has never noticed.

La Ciénaga's invisibility, (not something that has been noticed either by barrio residents or Ciudad Alternativa to whom I later show map), serves to underline the current futility of the residents' frequent demands and incursions. Their services are not the official responsibility of either the Ayuntamiento or Dixi who therefore are unlikely to respond to their protests. What is however clearly visible from the barrio is something related but rather different: the extent of the institutional chaos which surrounds waste collection. From the barrio perspective, the contract which nominates one institution as responsible has always been a myth. They have witnessed four institutions making sporadic attempts to collect their rubbish: central government, the Ayuntamiento, CAASD (the parastatal responsible for water and sewers and therefore the cañadas), and Dixi.³³³

I visit all these institutions and find that the attempts on the part of Dixi to distance themselves from the barrio are not unusual. The CAASD, who are responsible for the

³³³ Many in the barrio would suggest that the DCND are the fifth institution involved in waste collection. As noted above, I do visit the DCND but abandon my enquiries for reasons of personal safety.

waste which accumulates in the cañadas and thus one of the institutions who theoretically at least, are still involved in waste collection, use extreme language when I talk to them;

'La gente están en algo que es del río...en mi opinión personal es un parte turístico' 'People are in something that belongs to the river...in my personal opinion that is a tourist area.' (Ing. Luís Baez , CAASD representative)

By claiming the barrio is actually a place mistakenly appropriated from the river, somehow 'stolen' through the practice of filling in the marsh with relleno, the CAASD abrogate their institutional responsibilities to the barrio. It is a form of institutional dissimulation through which the issue becomes not one of basura collection but rather the removal of the human population. The development of the city depends on the 'obligatory exclusion' of those who currently live in the barrio. If, as Douglas suggests, waste is an issue of demarcation and separation, it would seem that the barrio is for many a more uncomfortable issue than the rubbish itself.³³⁴

The CAASD furthermore illustrate the institutional disorder common to the city's waste institutions. Created in 1974 to oversee five hundred kilometres of water and sewerage pipes, they are currently without a budget to maintain a leaking, blocked network. Moreover, they are not aware of what is being built by central government (three separate

³³⁴ Douglas 1966/84: 4

and non communicating offices of central government are involved),³³⁵ the Ayuntamiento and other private urban developers or non governmental institutions. The water treatment works whose construction was the original cause for the first desalojo along the Bonavide have for example never been formally handed over to the CAASD by the government. The pipes which should connect the plant to the city water network were never built and this vast structure, built at considerable cost and once the site of hundreds of homes, stands idle, serving only to remind the remaining residents who live adjacent to it in La Ciénaga, of the precariousness of their existence.³³⁶ The missing pipes seem a terrible metaphor for the ways in which the government and institutions I visit have tried to disconnect themselves from the city's underneath and have failed to communicate amongst themselves.

Debates which surround the contract hide much deeper institutional, technical and financial chaos. The 10 million contract is fictive, not only in terms of its invisibility (the much questioned contractual process), or even because the specified rubbish is not collected. The demarcations of who is responsible for what waste, in which parts of the city, are far more complex than the albeit confusing story of a contract and the contracting company imply. Continuing my path through the institutions I discover at least three levels of government organise rubbish collection services as well as numerous individuals,

³³⁵ Secretariado de Obras Publicas, Oficina Coordinador de Obras del Estado, Oficina. de Ingenieros Supervisores

³³⁶ Estimates of the number of homes lost in this desalojo vary. A COPADEBA representative was quoted in *El Siglo* as claiming 8,000 families were made homeless (*El Siglo* 17.08.91)

entrepreneurs and voluntary groups. The city has become an enormous rubbish operation, an urban economy built on waste (in all senses of the word). Inefficient not only because the streets above and below the bridge remain choked with the rubbish but because it has become increasingly obvious that city wide expenditure on the service far exceeds the official figure of RD\$ 120 million enshrined in the contract.

The city institutions are not working effectively even when judged according to their own terms or categories: the budget too is a fiction. An attempt to determine the additional sums the Ayuntamiento spends on 'cleaning' those areas of the city for which they remain responsible is both complicated and revealing. I discover that no budgets exist so Rafael Espinal (the vice president of the Ayuntamiento *síndico*) obligingly delegates a couple of his staff to work out figures for the previous year's expenditure. A couple of weeks, many telephone calls and corridor wanderings later, I am given a budget for the calendar year of 1996. Of the total Ayuntamiento budget of over 329 million (RD\$ 329, 400,000.00) almost 73 million (RD\$72, 971, 964.58) is spent on cleaning and '*ornatos*', [adornments].³³⁷ The latter category (over 16 million) is explained to me as such works which lead to the 'beautification of the city' and includes expenditure on parks, plants and 'embellishments'.

³³⁷ The annual sum of RD\$ 120 million received by Dixi is of course not included in this Ayuntamiento budget since it is paid directly by central government.

These figures do not include the costs of administrative personnel in the relevant departments. In terms of employees, 3,000 out of 4,000 employees of the Ayuntamiento are involved in 'cleaning'. Three quarters of the city council employees and almost one third of the annual budget (twenty seven percent) are thus devoted to an activity, the bulk of which is officially contracted out to a private company, Dixi. As Espinal laughingly admits, deliciously aware of the double meaning, the Ayuntamiento is a 'rubbish enterprise'.

Efforts to establish central government expenditure on rubbish collection services, beyond the official contractual payment to Dixi, are less successful. Rubbish became a central issue in the national elections of 1996. Immediately after his election victory Leonel Fernández declared 'a state of emergency' setting up a '*Comisión de Emergencia*' with representatives from Attwoods (then still managing the contract), the Ayuntamiento and the Secretary of State for the Armed Forces. One of the president's first activities (along with visiting the barrio), was to visit the city dump, the vertedero in Guaricano, by helicopter.³³⁸

³³⁸ 'Leonel Fernandez *detains* himself in the door of his helicopter to hear more details about the proposed solutions, to the rubbish problem'. *El Siglo* 27.08.96 (my translation and italics) Just as in the barrio, it seems evident on this occasion that the president did not wish to get too close to the 'rubbish'.

City cleaning it must be emphasised, is not the government's responsibility yet, the only elected PLD senator,³³⁹ Luis Inchaustí was put in charge of an emergency cleaning operation part of which included the cleaning of the cañada Bonavide. Two hundred and fifty lorry loads of rubbish were taken out of the barrio as part of a widely publicised public relations exercise.³⁴⁰ At a slightly lesser scale, the operation continues; trucks and workers dressed in the party political colours of yellow and purple pass regularly through the streets of Gazcue and occasionally down the new roads of La Ciénaga. The choice of routes is apparently random; some days both Dixi and the PLD dispatch trucks down the same streets, during other weeks the rubbish mounts up as trucks from either side fail to visit. Inchaustí informed me that it would be too politically sensitive to divulge the sums the central government are spending on this operation.

A fruitless search for budgets in the central bank demonstrates that there is no official allocation for waste collection within a government budget. Indeed, searching for figures on waste I became aware of the full and continuing chaos within the national budgeting

³³⁹ After the widespread protests and allegations of corruption which followed the 1994 presidential elections, "won" once again by Balaguer a compromise was mediated by Carter and other members of a US delegation under which the country would go to the polls again in only a two year period to elect a president (see chapter five). A complicated situation has resulted in which the winning party the PLD hold the presidency but a minority of seats in the house of representatives and only one seat in the senate. Seats in both houses are shared between Balaguer's PRSC party and the PRD who are widely believed to have won the elections in 1994. Last minute deals between the PLD and the PRSC in the 1996 elections ensured that Leonel Fernández won however his position is tenuous and much time and political debate is consumed by questions as to when and in what form the next elections should be held.

³⁴⁰ This figure was given to me in an interview with Nelson Troca, president of CONAO, the Consejo Nacional de Asuntos Urbanos established by the president to look at urban issues. '*Tanta calumnidad no espera*', 'Such calamity cannot wait' he explained to me. *Hoy* reported that 3,500 cubic metres of rubbish were removed (11.03.97) and all the major newspapers and television bulletins carried pictures.

process.³⁴¹ Monthly expenditures of central government are published in the national newspapers, yet the confusing headlines (innumerable columns dedicated to different aspects of construction), tell their own story. Since budgets do however form the basis of IMF negotiations I pretend at least to be somewhat mystified by their absence in the central bank. A pretense greeted with knowing amusement by those who work there.

Above the bridge the debate around waste, like that around other services is conducted in the language of equilibrium economics; the laws of supply and demand, the need for balanced budgets. This is a debate which in recent decades has taken on the global neo-liberal hue; restrained expenditure, retrenchment of personnel, the merits of privatisation. All arguments which are used to explain the difficulty if not the impossibility of meeting the needs of the *barrio* populations. Arguments which, incidentally, are treated with a mixture of disdain and derision in La Ciénaga. During the months of the presidential infrastructure project I frequently asked residents what they would prioritise within the budget. Such a question has no premise in the *barrio* where everyone ‘knows’ that the president might spend what he pleases. Sure enough, one day in April, ‘Leonel’ announced a further RD\$ 10 million would be available, in addition to the RD\$ 14 million already promised for the *barrio* infrastructure.³⁴²

341 Balaguer infamously managed all ‘household’ expenditure and contracts personally in a notebook as discussed in chapter three. Leonel attempted unsuccessfully to pass a budget through congress after the 1996 elections. He is reputedly having to stick to that of his predecessor, an impossibility not least because of the number of new senior administrative positions established in a politicised civil service, an attempt to balance the political forces left by the irregular election process. This intervention alone has had the effect of increasing the civil service wage bill from RD\$ 450 million to RD\$ 900 million (*Hoy* 13.05.97)

342 *Hoy* 14.04.97

The budget is a foundational category of the modern political economy; regulating how services are provided, how the state relates to both their multi national service providers and financial creditors, and to the households from whom payment is demanded.³⁴³ The waste contract has exposed a fiction. At the level of the state an unknown and undisclosed sum (which far exceeds 10 million) is spent on a series of services which sporadically clean (some) streets of the city. This lack of a rational budgeting process furthermore extends to include not only central government and the central bank, but the private, multi national company. As I get to know de Lemos better he confesses, I think honestly, that given the operating conditions they are unsure of costs or profits.³⁴⁴ The myth of a rational socio economic framework which the barrio transgresses or somehow refuses to fit, can no longer hold.

Having journeyed to the city tip, interviewed a range of individuals and discussed my explorations with many in the barrio, I returned to Dixi and the Ayuntamiento with my

³⁴³ Officially, the collection of payments for all services remains the responsibility of the Ayuntamiento. Bills are calculated on a three tier basis using a still non existant cadastre. An official document shows a sliding scale of costs but the relevant page of figures is missing. As I waited over the weeks for it to be found I tried another tactic, asking friends who live in different parts of the city and supposedly pay for their rubbish collection, what and how they pay. From Gazcue to La Ciénaga no one pays and moreover no one knows when or how their bills come. Payment becomes a very different exercise in a city where services are not always provided, never continuous and the chaotic state of institutional finance is known. The CAASD for example estimate that 15 percent of their customers pay water bills and in desperation frequently take out advertisements in the paper announcing that those who pay outstanding bills will have the amount reduced by 70 percent (see for example *Hoy* 25.04.97)] an obvious incentive for the late or non payment of future bills. The Ayuntamiento's proposed initiative to increase rubbish bills at the time of writing is to persuade the central government to agree to include electricity and waste disposal on the same household invoice. Currently only 3 percent of customers pay their electricity bill [Vargas 1996; 36] and yet the Ayuntamiento assure me this would be an improvement !

³⁴⁴ This affirms the claims of *Hoy* with regard to the 'surprising level of vagueness' in the formula used to establish operational costs as set out in the contract (*Hoy* 20.3.97).

composite picture and asked them for their solutions to the problems of the city's waste. While they do not challenge my interpretations, they return at once to the standard story; the need to further reduce staff (in the case of Dixi) and to increase fixed capital investment in terms of purchasing more and larger trucks (in the case of Dixi and the Ayuntamiento). Castellanos of the Ayuntamiento does recognise the political dimension as a complicating factor; '*hay que invertir en un renglón que no parece verse*', 'you have to invest in a line item which cannot be seen'. I assume his comment refers to the necessary institutional overhauls which are needed as opposed to an investment in visible (and therefore politically popular) trucks.³⁴⁵ Castellanos goes on to present his answer to the particular problem of the barrios; a rotating fund which will pass monthly from one barrio Junta de Vecinos [neighbourhood committee] to the other.

From the perspective of the barrio these 'solutions' are scarcely viable. It is hard to see how a rotating fund would do anything other than exacerbate political feuds at the local level and result in a once off and therefore useless cleaning in each barrio. While the labour cutting measures in the case of Dixi would not affect the poorest in the barrios and could be creatively avoided if undertaken by the Ayuntamiento, the promise of larger trucks is to guarantee that, even should the barrio be included in the maps of one of the two institutions, it could not be 'penetrated'. The few streets where the trucks can currently enter would become impassable. The imaginative redeployment of current

³⁴⁵ Others I speak to above the bridge, suggest that Castellanos may welcome the invisibility of the project since a private company in which he reputedly has a significant stake has won a US\$ 5 million contract to

resources, flexible investment in diverse ‘capital’ such as the design of stronger caretilas used by Mario; these are ways of thinking which the service providers and planners above the bridge have not begun to imagine.³⁴⁶

Within the institutions above the bridge a curious process of double thinking takes place; a process in which there is an acceptance that the current model is not working yet the response and solution is to insist on the self same model in ever more extreme forms. It is a form of dissimulation that has obvious parallels to processes in the barrio. To admit to the full difficulties would be to admit to a state of overwhelming anxiety. It is easier to adhere to the standard story and, since it is not entirely fictive, this proves possible for a while. It is not completely irrational and certainly a lot less demanding than the re-imagining required. It is however stressful and ultimately fragile: things never quite ‘work’, the problems continue to lurk.

As the rubbish mounts up, the economic and political arrangements become an ever more tangled chaos, and individuals within the institutions resort to very similar strategies to those above the bridge. de Lemos ceaselessly lobbies central government for a change in his contract while Espinal resorts to the *agache*, his conversation full of witticisms. Others below him in the hierarchy explain to me with a shrug of the shoulders that they are a ‘third world’ city council, taught by the ‘experts’ who come in and out from the

overhaul the dump.

United Nations, World Bank and other international organisations that their scope and possibilities are somehow limited. (That I have come from a city of nearly nine million inhabitants in the 'first world', that has not been able to organise a citywide council at all in recent years is greeted with disbelief both within the Ayuntamiento and the barrio). There are obvious institutional parallels with the way I have discussed earlier that the discourse of development teaches whole communities to see themselves as in some way impoverished.³⁴⁷ In the Ayuntamiento the poverty that results is one of the imagination. Within the bureaucracy as much as within the barrio creativity has been stifled.

Despite their neatly pressed suits, secretaries and other trappings, the bureaucrats, politicians and planners (like those in the barrio) must obstinately hold on to odd hopes and dreams. Yet, at another level there is a recognition that things could be different (again, as in the barrio). Despite the veneer of cynicism, there is a hope within the city's waste institutions, that I might have brought a solution from the barrio.

³⁴⁶ See for example Lefebvre's discussion of contradictory space and the need to re-imagine fixed capital (1974/91:345).

³⁴⁷ See Escobar (1992; 413) and my discussion in chapter three.

THE SYSTEM SHATTERED AND RENEWED³⁴⁸: A BARRIO SOLUTION

To seek solutions to the waste problems within La Ciénaga is to tap innumerable ideas. Everyone has had to think about the issue and has imagined a solution. However, as so often in the barrio, these are not things that have been voiced '*en voz alta*', 'aloud'. This unwillingness to speak aloud finds a recognisable place in the work of Freud, Douglas and Kristeva. Freud and Kristeva for example dwell on the unvoiced, emphasising that the very nature of dirt (something that has been rejected) makes it a subject from which one turns away.³⁴⁹ Douglas notes that, 'it is unpleasant to poke about in the refuse to try to recover anything, for this revives identity'.³⁵⁰ Her words address the crux of the matter. To confront the issue of waste is to turn to face the nightmare: something from which one has attempted to separate oneself, yet, from which one can never truly be separate.

The extent to which internal feelings and a sense of identity are imbricated within the built spaces and the physical detritus of the barrio has been discussed in earlier chapters. I argue that to address the issue of physical waste is for residents to face the most feared anxiety of their own low self worth, those anxieties hitherto avoided by the practices of dissimulation. Barrio residents have not previously spoken 'aloud', not only because their opinions have not been sought. In the context of Santo Domingo, to address the issue of waste is furthermore to confront the external myths; the dreams of escape to a

³⁴⁸ Douglas 1966/84: 160

³⁴⁹ Freud 1930/91: 282 and Kristeva 1980/82: 4

socially and physically cleaner city above the bridge must also be abandoned. The imagined city is, like the barrio, in danger of becoming a waste tip and to discuss solutions is to engage with the way the barrio and the city are entangled.

As we do start to talk ideas and solutions mutate, dissolve and evolve. It is as if the old stories have to be rehearsed before new ones emerge. As I listen, I see parallels between this process and María's descriptions of weaving a new story to heal. Douglas herself was interested in 'how dirt, which is normally destructive, sometimes becomes creative'.³⁵¹ She suggested that processes of concrete and social renewal can start when that which has been rejected is once again accepted, but in a different way. Her words seem to describe the process which unfolds within the barrio, as those I work with come to find a new, previously unimagined solution to their rubbish problem. This is a process in which passions run high, yet a sense of the ridiculous is never far away.

Barrio solutions initially put forward range from the reaches of wilder imaginings to ideas 'borrowed' from other places. Magaly concentrates on 'invention' suggesting that a chemical is either 'imported' or developed to melt the rubbish; *'debe haber esos químicos raros que se resuelve'*, 'there has to be one of those strange chemicals which will solve it.' Everyone is amused at the idea that a chemical will (dis)solve the problem. The

³⁵⁰ Douglas 1966/84: 160

³⁵¹ Douglas 1966/84: 159

vanishing basura is perhaps an expression of the ultimate desire to separate oneself from the problem, to bury the contaminated and the unthinkable.

Freddy, the barrio organiser, suggests that the solution is 'to copy other sectors of the city' explaining how a rubbish project works in Los Manguitos, another barrio of the city where an NGO have set up a collective of small scale entrepreneurs who work with carts collecting rubbish. Juliana currently taking evening classes above the bridge mentions a recycling project in the barrio of Las Canitas; '*... un grupo que clasifican la basura, por ejemplo los viveres se puede usar como abono*', '...a group who classify the rubbish, for example you can use root vegetables for manure'. It is striking that both these ideas discussed as something 'new' are initiatives that I have already seen within the barrio, established by the residents themselves, on their own initiative. This is a reminder that barrio networks (in this case those of information) often extend more easily to other parts of the city than within the barrio, amongst those it is supposed might form a community.

The heterogeneity of barrio views is ever apparent as the discussions progress. A wide number of different solutions are proposed and opinions vary equally widely as to their respective merits. Mario for example provides a service to some and is criticised by others. Those who have watched him collect basura within the barrio, only to dump it on the central Avenida where it festers, comment, '*y eso en definitiva no es una solución*', 'and that definitely is not a solution'. The recycling which is taking place within La Ciénaga (unseen by Juliana and many of her friends) provides an excellent example both

of the contrasting practices within the barrio and of the way in which a solution suggested from one person's perspective might ignore, conflict with or even potentially eradicate a beneficial strategy used by another.

Almost everyone in the barrio sorts the 'clean' rubbish primarily used for relleno from the rest, but more detailed sorting depends on the time available, gender and ultimately individual whim. In Yonesa's group, the women immediately rattle off at least five types of careful sorting they habitually use. Bottles are sold to a bottle collector, leaves and some paper are burnt, rice (which rots quickly and smells particularly badly if thrown away, something always graphically described) is given to chickens and pigs, house sweepings and other rubbish are either abandoned or thrown in the cañada. When I ask the womens' husbands, in a men's group, about the practice, they assure me that I am confused and that nobody in the barrio sorts or classifies their rubbish. When Yonesa and her friends hear of this, they immediately retort that this only goes to show how machista the men are;

'Los hombres son tan machista, a la mayoría no lo importa. No! Somos nosotros quienes estamos mas encargado de esto.'

'The men are so macho that the majority of them just don't bother about it. No! We are the ones who are in charge of this.'

(Yonesa)

Domestic rubbish disposal is traditionally women's work. In practice, as Juliana's comments reveal, this does not mean that all the women in the barrio are aware of the

different disposal methods used. For Juliana recycling seems to be something new and sophisticated. Her imagination is excited by a practice she associates with homes above the bridge, and she is evidently surprised when I tell her that some of her near neighbours already recycle. The incident is a further example of what Lefebvre referred to as 'metonymic manoeuvres'.³⁵² A new label makes an old

policing. These are all stories that are eventually used up.

I find the demand for education particularly interesting. Both those above and below the bridge seem convinced that it is a necessary and inviolate solution to the problem, despite its obvious and continued failings in practice.³⁵³ Above the bridge, the commonly held perception that people's 'mentality' needs changing has resulted in significant investment in educational campaigns. The poster quoted below, designed by the Ayuntamiento for distribution within the city's barrios, has a fascinating message.

Tú eres la ciudad...

You are the city...

La ciudad es el frente de tu casa, de tu

The city is in front of your house, of your

³⁵² Lefebvre 1974/91: 326. See chapter three and the discussion on river pollution for an earlier illustration of this 'manoeuvre'.

³⁵³ IDDI a Dominican NGO who established the rubbish project in Los Manguitos to which Freddy refers, are widely admired for their work yet even they have been unable to implement the educational component of the project. The project evaluation shows that while all other areas of the project reached their objectives by 100 percent, the educational component was only 25 percent successful (no criteria are given). IDDI 1997

³⁵⁴ Educational poster produced by FEJUVEDINA with the Ayuntamiento as part of the project for Juntas de Vecinos to clean their barrios on a rotating basis referred to by Castellanos above. (February 1997)

negocio, de tu propiedad.

business, of your property

Dondequiera que tú encuentres, la capital te

Wherever you find yourself, the capital is

queda enfrente.

in front of you.

No ensucies tu personalidad,

Don't dirty your personality,

limpia tu frente.

clean your front [facade].

Limpia la frente de tu ciudad.³⁵⁴

Clean the front of your city.

Waste is presented here as an issue in which both personal and urban identity are enjoined. The text provides an example of the way similar language used above and below the bridge can however carry very different messages and understandings. The Ayuntamiento are not able to develop their metaphorical understanding of the identity issues behind waste and their message ends with a futile command for cleanliness. Those posters distributed in the barrio become a further source of litter or a curious form of decoration on residents' walls.

Within the barrio, Margot is one who insists that rubbish is an educational problem;

'No tenemos educación - lo tiramos donde

'We aren't educated - we chuck it

quiera..Se pudiera hacer muchas cosas

wherever...One could do many things but

pero carecemos de educación...'

we lack education...' (Margot)

Her appraisal (once again) does not correspond with the daily reality she lives. Despite being one of the barrio's most respected comadres, her admonishments to those around her that they should not merely abandon their litter, go unheeded. Jaqueline, her

neighbour, is typical. Jaqueline continues to complain about those who dump their rubbish, while resorting to similar secretive strategies herself.

<i>'Como te digo, hay gente que tiran basura</i>	'Like I say, there are people who chuck
<i>pero hay gente que son mas basura que la</i>	rubbish, but there are people who are more
<i>que tiran.'</i>	rubbish than what they chuck.' (Jaqueline)
<i>'Pero usted puede corregir eso poniendo</i>	'But you could fix that by putting up a
<i>un alambre p'a que no pasan allá.'</i>	wire so they can't get through.' (America)
<i>'Se llevaron los alambres que pusé.'</i>	'They took the wires I put there.'
	(Jaqueline)
<i>'Como va a ser ?'</i>	'How can that be ?' (America)
<i>'Se llevaron.'</i>	'They took them.' (Jaqueline)
<i>'Ay señores !'</i>	'Oh heavens.' (America)
<i>'Yo, lo que me hago, es que rio.'</i>	'Me, what I do, is I laugh' (Jaqueline)

We all laugh at Jaqueline's story, even though we all know (and don't mention) that she too uses similar methods to dispose of her rubbish. Jaqueline herself is equally aware that rubbish should not be abandoned; it is irritating, unsightly and the source of her children's illnesses. It is hard to see the role of education in this context. Littering, I suggest is intimately connected to the practice of dissimulation (as is the knowing laughter of our

response to Jaqueline’s story). To block out the barrio and disassociate oneself from one’s surroundings, allows for more littering to take place.³⁵⁵

As so often in the barrio, despite the protestations, people know that education alone will not be a sufficient inducement. It is this tacit acknowledgment that education is insufficient which leads to the demands for legal enforcement in the forms of fines and imprisonment for those who chuck rubbish into the cañada or who walk as far as the Avenida only to open their plastic bag and drop the rubbish where they are standing;

<i>‘Si usted lo tira y sabe que va a caer preso</i>	‘If you chuck it and know you that you
<i>- ahí si hay conciencia. Leyes que en</i>	will be incarcerated - then there really
<i>verdad obligen a la gente.’</i>	would be ‘consciousness’. Laws which
	really do coerce people.’ (America)

There is an unwritten rule regarding the cañada that to drop in the odd item is acceptable and to discard vast quantities of rubbish during the rain is similarly good practice. To use the cañadas at all times as an open tip should however be prohibited. The cañadas should be ‘vigilated’;

<i>‘Si se pone dos o tres policía en la cañada,</i>	‘If they put two or three police in the
<i>de una vez se cambia’</i>	cañada, things would change at once.’
	(Jaqueline)

³⁵⁵ Kristeva notes that a strong ritualisation of defilement often appears to be accompanied by one’s being totally blind to filth itself (1980/82: 74).

This commonly proposed solution, while apparently extreme on one level given the complicated and ambiguous relationship with the police, again mirrors the situation above the bridge where the military must vigilate the lighthouse and other monuments, under siege from the rubbish.

Over time as the conversations ebb and flow a fault line emerges. There is a broad division between those who believe the way ahead lies in a solution that addresses the particular and pressing needs of the barrio and those who believe in continued ‘attacks’ on the Ayuntamiento, to demand that the barrio is included in the city wide waste collection services. For some the issue is stark. The usually voluble María for instance cannot even be drawn into discussions on the basura;

‘La basura? Aha! Que mandan un camion todo los días para recogerlo. Eso.’ ‘The rubbish ?’ Aha! They should send a truck every day to collect it. That’s it.’

(María)

‘It’s simple; the Coca Cola lorries enter most of the barrio why then doesn’t Dixi?’ For María at least there is nothing more to say.

What is at stake in the waste debate are issues around the meaning of citizenship and urban development. To pressurise the Ayuntamiento is not to lobby for waste services alone, it is to seek recognition as citizens, residents of a barrio which should occupy its rightful place within the city;

*'Todos esos barrios marginados por lo
gobierno, y esa gran herarquía tu ves.
Entonces suceden esas cosas.'* (America)

'All those barrios marginalised by the
government, and this great hierarchy you
see. That's why these things happen.'

America, like many others in La Ciénaga (see the discussion led by Amparo in chapter one), has a sophisticated analysis of the way in which the barrio's marginality is constructed. It is not that La Ciénaga is in some inherent way a marginal place within the city and therefore without services (indeed as many of the residents frequently comment, they live in the geographic heart of Santo Domingo). It is rather the government's political decision making through which the barrio is made marginal.³⁵⁶ An alternative solution which does not address these wider issues of the barrio's articulation to the city and its political processes, is not wanted. Such a solution would further marginalise the barrio.

Those who argue against a barrio specific solution draw on the profound fears of 'imprisonment' discussed in chapter two. A chorus of protest greets the odd individual who occasionally suggests that formal tips are established *within* the barrio;

'...la muerte para nosotros.'

'...it would be death for us.' (Altagracia)

'...el barrio será un vertedero eterno.'

'...the barrio would be a tip for all eternity.'

(Sonya)

³⁵⁶ This definition of marginality is very close to that made by Castells, who defines marginality in relation to services (1983: 185).

At the heart of these often fierce rebuttals is a very real and bitter understanding of the way in which a solution which makes the problem even less visible to those above the bridge would remove any pressure for an ultimate solution, fatally entrenching the barrio's marginality. The waste in the Avenida that flows from the cañada to the river is a complex marker at once of the barrio's marginality but also of its presence within the arteries of the city; a blockage that demands attention.³⁵⁷

This rejection of a waste solution that addresses the particular issues of the barrio amounts to a firm rejection of the integrated urban development project espoused by non governmental organisations and increasingly by the World Bank.³⁵⁸ Recently, Satterthwaite, one of the originators of the integrated urban development project, which concentrates on the overall improvement of services and conditions in a particular place, has reconsidered schemes that concentrate on 'settlements'. He acknowledges the differences between households within particular places and that many of the urban poor live outside those places designated as 'poor'.³⁵⁹ He does not however address the concerns articulated by the residents of La Ciénaga, who do not wish their problems to be seen in isolation from the wider city. Rather, Satterthwaite suggests that the experience of organising 'community based' solutions will empower residents in their negotiations

³⁵⁷ Again, this understanding echoes the arguments made by Spivak and Butler; to be marginal is not to be completely excluded or invisible, but rather visible in such a way that comparisons can be drawn. See chapter one.

³⁵⁸ See for example Hardoy and Satterthwaite 1989 and the World Bank 1991. Within the Dominican Republic IDDI have been the organisation most successful in promulgating and implementing the integrated development approach.

with external agencies and authorities.³⁶⁰ As I have argued with respect to waste, and in chapter one concerning community organisation, the order of this process is not viable for the residents of La Ciénaga, who must first confront how they feel about their barrio, a challenge which implies re-thinking and re-structuring their place within the city from the outset. Finally, it should be noted that the residents’ rejection of the integrated development approach is in part a rejection too of the way of seeing which underpins the Jesuits’ interventions. The Jesuit vision is one which sometimes too strongly acclaims not only the distinct nature of the barrio, but its value as a way of living.

Many of these debates between those who advocate a barrio solution and those who insist that further pressure must be put on the city authorities, take place during the first month of the government’s infrastructure project (see chapter five). It seems to many in the early stages of the project that a president who is lining the cañada and building roads must have some sort of plan for rubbish collection;

<p><i>‘Señores - hay que ver el trabajo que se está haciendo en la Bonavides - eso es extraordinaria. Seguro que alguna medida van a aplicar. Van a venir vehículos. Por eso están haciendo las calles.’</i></p>	<p>‘Gentlemen - you have to see the work they are doing in the [cañada] Bonavides - it’s extraordinary. It has to be that they are going to apply some sort of remedy [to the rubbish]. Vehicles are going to come. That’s what they’re doing the roads for.’</p>
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³⁵⁹ Satterthwaite 1997: 19

³⁶⁰ Satterthwaite 1997: 20

(Javier)

A week later, after the rains which wash away the 'extraordinary' construction, Javier will have changed his mind. The conviction that the state should provide a service, and that with the new president there is a greater chance that this might happen, has anyway always sat uneasily with the knowledge that the waste collection crisis is one the entire city faces;

<i>'Eso es de toda la capital -ahora mismo</i>	'This is a thing common to the whole
<i>ellos no saben que van a hacer con tanta</i>	capital - right now they don't know what
<i>basura.'</i>	to do with so much rubbish.' (Fautina)

Despite their burlesque views of the budget and its mythical limits, residents do clearly recognise that the barrio is low on the city's list of priorities at a time when the whole city is '*insaludable*', in an 'unhealthy state'. This recognition frays nerves and provokes doubts as to the wisdom of investing more precious time in lobbying the government. There are those who continue to argue that a wiser strategy is to concentrate on finding an alternative solution.

A bitter argument breaks out between Amparo and Silín about whether the solution is a barrio initiative (paying individuals to carry the *basura* away) or constant pressure on the authorities to provide a service;

<p><i>'Lo daría mas resultado si lo hacemos en grupos de vecinos por sector. Es decir por ejemplo que nos organizemos a buscar alguien - 2o 3 personas - a pagarles para que la suban arriba. Tú quizás puedes subir con tu fundita pero hay miles que no podrán hacerlo tal vez su tiempo es corto, tal vez...'</i></p> <p><i>'Yo digo que no.'</i></p> <p><i>'Si, el tiempo disponible, la distancia que tenemos. Buscar en ellos por 5 o 3 pesos...'</i></p> <p><i>'Yo sé que hay muchas maneras diferentes si a uno le preocupa a eso - que se haga. Lo que vuelvo y digo aunque nosotros no les dan el servicio pero insisto...'</i></p> <p><i>[interrumpiendo] 'Todavía no bajan los camiones pero si nosotros nos organizaramos en esa forma quizás, dando</i></p>	<p><i>'What would be more better is if we did it in groups of neighbours by sector, let's say for example, we organised ourselves to look for someone - two or three people - to pay them for them to carry it above [ie. to the Avenida]. You perhaps can carry your own bag up but there are thousands who can't, perhaps their time is too short, perhaps...'</i> (Amparo)</p> <p><i>'I say no.'</i> (Silín)</p> <p><i>'Yes, the time available, the distance we have. Look to them, for 5 or 3 pesos...'</i> (A.)</p> <p><i>'I know that there are many different ways - if one bothers thinking about it - that it could be done. What I say again is that although they don't provide us with a service I insist...'</i> (S.)</p> <p><i>[interrupting] 'Still the trucks aren't coming down but if we organised ourselves in this way, perhaps, setting an example...'</i> (A.)</p>
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un ejemplo...'

[interrumpiendo] 'Insisto...'

Si nosotros compramos fundas y

analizamos mas o menos...'

[Silín ahora muy enojada y gritando]

'Nosotros no vamos a discutir eso porque

tú idea es la tuya y yo siento como tú lo

estas diciendo como tu quieres tumbar la

mía! Que no! Tú pone la tuya. Yo la mía.'

Pero está bien...'

Pero yo creo...'

Está bien no vamos a entrar

en una polémica...'

Pero lo que nosotros

estamos exponiendo no tiene nádie que

tumbar los ideas. Cada uno que cree...'

[hc tratando de mediar un argumento que

se toma muy agresivot...] 'Mire, mire yo

quiero escuchar a las dos, vamos a dejar a

[again, cutting Amparo off] 'I insist...' (S.)

'If we bought plastic bags and worked out

more or less...' (A.)

[Silín really angry now and shouting]

'We're not going to discuss that because

your idea is yours and I feel that you are

saying it as if you want to knock down

mine ! Well no! You put yours. I'll put

mine.' (S.)

'Well alright...' (A.)

'But I think...' (S.)

'Alright, we're not going to

get into some polemic...' (A.)

'But in what we are

putting forward, nobody has to knock

down the other ideas. Each can think...'

(S.)

[I attempt ineffectually to break into what

has now become a nasty argument] 'Look,

look, I want to hear you both, let's let each

cada una terminar...'

one finish...' (hc)

'Pero yo no estoy tumbando. Pero simplemente...'

'But I'm not knocking you down. But simply...' (A.)

Pero no! Tu estás diciendo lo que tu dices es mejor que la mía. Eso me da cuerda'

But no ! You are saying that what you say is better than mine. It's winding me up.' (S.)

'No pero es realidad. Tu lo vas a decirlo - todo el mundo se va a poner de acuerdo pero no todo el mundo va a hacerlo.'

'No, but it's the reality. You are going to say it - everyone is going to come to an agreement, but not everyone is going to do it.' (A.)

Mentira! Lo que pasa es que tú no puedes ser tan negativa uno siempre tiene que ser positivo aún no se le dé. Tu sabes lo que van a decir la gente - al Ayuntamiento se le paga para coger esa mierda. Aha! Eso es! Mucha gente aquí no tiene 10 pesos para comer y van a dar 5 para la basura ? [Amparo todavía tratando de hablar '...es que es lógico...'] Habiendo un río ahí, y una cañada y una esquina donde se puede tirar...'

'That's a lie ! The thing is you can't be so negative, one has to be positive, *even if* it doesn't come about. You know what people are going to say - the Ayuntamiento is paid so they pick up that shit. Aha! That's how it is ! Many people here don't have 10 pesos to eat and they're going to give five 5 pesos for the basura ? [Amparo is still trying to break in. '....it's that it's logical....] Given that there's a river there, a cañada and a corner where you can just

chuck it...' (S.)

At this point the conversation breaks into unintelligible shouts. Even the normally terrorising baby Stalin is terrorised and starts to wail. I firmly change the subject but the atmosphere is close and tense. This is an argument about possibilities, what to do about the rubbish given the political and economic framework above the bridge. It is about something much deeper too; about daring to dream, the possibilities of change if you live in a barrio built on rubbish. And in the process the fragility of selves is once again underlined. The terror in one even so strong as Silín that someone is trying to knock down her ideas is an abrupt reminder of the difficulty of debate and problem solving within the barrio.³⁶¹ Such arguments grow from the tension of living in an infrastructureless barrio; they are arguments with which those who have a rubbish collection service do not have to engage.

A solution that addresses the pressing and particular needs of the barrio is clearly necessary; however a solution which treats the barrio as a distinct unit of the city is not wanted. Within the barrio rubbish collection is explicitly an issue that residents do not want to get too close to. As stated above, alternative ideas and solutions had not previously been spoken aloud not only because no one had asked;

³⁶¹ Kristeva might also argue that Silín's reaction is rooted in the fear of formlessness associated with discussions of waste and abjection, a fear that she [Silín] herself, as well as her arguments might come to nothing (Kristeva 1980/82:2, 207).

'Yo no he hablado de eso. Yo he participado en muchas reuniones pero aunque ellos toquen el parte de la basura no queremos nos, nunca queremos involucrarnos en eso, no es problema nuestro...además la basura también es contaminación'

'I haven't spoken about this. I have participated in many meetings but although they touch on the issue of rubbish we don't ourselves want, we never want, to involve ourselves in it, it's not our problem...and moreover the rubbish is contaminating.'
(Javier)

Even in community meetings, no-one wants to 'touch' the issue of waste. What can and cannot be spoken of in these meetings is defined by a fear of contamination. Not unlike the president himself, those who live in the barrio are afraid of being too closely associated with the underneath. A barrio solution would bind the residents to that they are so anxious to reject. At the same time, it is clear that the government, either through lack of political will or imagination, is unable to deliver the services demanded. Just as in the bitter stalemate between Amparo and Silín, it appeared that an impasse had been reached.

'Part of our human condition', wrote Mary Douglas, 'is to long for hard lines and clear concepts (the search for purity). The paradox is both that the experience is not amenable and that the attempt itself exposes the contradictions'.³⁶² Within the barrio I continued to press for solutions. It appeared at first that a storying impasse had also been reached,

the old narratives exhausted in all the groups with whom I worked. What emerged over the following weeks however was not despair, rather the demand for a solution that would link the above and below, crossing the fault line of the arguments previously explored; these were the new imaginings.

<i>'Yo he pensado aquí en una solución para la basura. Lo que pasa es, quién sabe, que si yo le tiro esa idea al gobierno o al Ayuntamiento - me van a poner de loco. Y que estoy loco que me van a llevar a un psiquiátrico. [hc rie] Claro porque mira aquí nosotros Dominicanos, es lamentable pero nosotros Dominicanos estamos tercos para aprender o ver que nos afecta. Que si ellos usaban un método para la basura que es de comprar la basura. Y si aquí compran la basura al peso por quintal, aquí se acaba el problema de la basura. No hay basura en el calle más nunca. Porque ? Porque todo el mundo van a</i>	<i>'I've thought here of a solution to the rubbish. The thing is who knows if I put it to the government or the Ayuntamiento - they're going to take me as crazy. And being crazy they'll take me to a psychiatrist. [hc laughs] Of course because look, we Dominicans, it's lamentable but we Dominicans are brutish when it comes to understanding what affects us. But if they used a method for the rubbish which is to buy the rubbish and if here they bought the rubbish for one peso per quintal, here the problem of rubbish would be over. There wouldn't be rubbish in the street ever again. Why ?</i>
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³⁶² Douglas 1966/84: 160

recoger p'a ir y venderla. Es más Because everyone will collect it up to go
beneficiosa al gobierno comprar la basura and sell it. It's a lot more beneficial for the
que pagar p'a recogerla y no la recogan.' government to buy the rubbish than to pay
for it to be collected and then they don't
collect it.' (Javier)

It was Javier who excitedly approached me one day with a solution. The idea that people should be paid for their rubbish is both beautiful in its simplicity and at once obvious in its logic. Others agree, add details and offer affirmation;

'Eso es el unico.'

'That's the only way.'

Se resuelva mucho mas barrata.'

'It'll be resolved much more
cheaply.'

'Es la única solución.'

'It's the only solution'.

(chorus of voices)

*'Se gasta menos dinero. Se gasta menos
dinero porque todo el mundo que quiere
van a ser empleados y de ahí van a ver
micro empresas - ahí van a ver mayoristas,
y de todo. Yo voy con quince plátanos y
vende a la gente por uno o dos. Así va a
ser con la basura. En todos los negocios
que son rentables hay búsqueda - diferentes
negociantes y así pasará con la basura.
Digo es un idea, nadie sabe.'*

'It will cost less money. Less money will
be spent because everyone who wants to
will be 'employed' and from there there
will be micro enterprises - from them will
come wholesalers and everything. I go with
my fifteen plantains and sell them to
people for one or two. That's how it will
be with the rubbish. In all businesses
which are profitable there is demand -
different sellers and that's how it will be
with the rubbish. I mean it's an idea,
nobody knows.' (Javier)

The solution suggested amounts to a genuine privatisation from below. Those who wish to will collect rubbish in the barrio and they will be paid by weight for that collected at central collection/weighing points. This labour intensive strategy would, as Javier recognises, provide intervention at different levels for individuals and small scale

enterprises. It would be self targeting at those who need the employment and income.

The cost to the state should be less than that currently expended on a service which is not provided.

The scheme builds on the economic, spatial and social logic of the barrio. Those with jobs which don't allow them the time to deal with their rubbish will have it picked up by others but, unlike in Amparo's scheme, they themselves will not have to pay. Resources will thus be concentrated not on fixed investment but at the lowest level of human capital. The diffuse network of collectors and the economic incentive will mean that no area of the barrio, irrespective of the architecture, will be inaccessible. Moreover there is no need to organise as a community which is not only difficult due to the divisiveness of the issue, but costly in terms of time and foregone income. The tantalising promise of a practical solution that might work leads in the following weeks to the spontaneous organisation of community meetings and re-animated discussions within the Junta de Vecinos. A sense of pride and possibility and the conviction that it will be '*una cosa p'a ver*', 'a thing to see', makes group talking easier.

Most importantly, this solution is a scheme which articulates the barrio to the wider city. As the project is broadly envisaged, central collection points would be established at the top of the barrio in the Avenida San Francisco Sanchez and at the bottom in the newly widened Ricardo Carty. The success of the project would then depend on a chain which ensures the rubbish would reach its end point at the city vertedero in Guaricano. Given

the reduced costs which the scheme implies, those who live in La Ciénaga now feel sure however that the government will feel obligated to comply, they will become like ‘partners’;

<i>‘Después que el gobierno tiene el</i>	<i>‘After the government have this</i>
<i>compromiso, la obligación...ellos tiene que</i>	<i>arrangement, the obligation...they will have</i>
<i>buscar que hacer con la basura.’</i>	<i>to look for what to do with the rubbish.’</i>

(Silín)

Both the perspectives and the activities of those above and below will be fused in a filiere which links backwards through national and city government, the contractor, intermediate groups and individuals within the barrio. Crucially the city is linked to the barrio in a project which is mobile, it can move and change, grow and mutate, as the city and the barrio change and alter with respect to one another.

It is of course a dream; solutions have been promised before in many different guises. Yet, this is one which has developed within the barrio from a lengthy process. Its innovative, previously unimagined nature feels tangibly different and it is interesting to observe how the discourse and gestures change. I have referred above to the way in which the government become seen as partners in a shared operation. Those in the barrio talk about themselves as advisors;

<i>‘...explicándoles la fórmula de como</i>	<i>‘...[we’ll] explain to them the formula, how</i>
<i>podemos ayudar...’</i>	<i>we can help them...’</i>

(Amparo)

This change to the position whereby the residents see themselves as those who can explain the project and help the government is startling. In discussions about the presidential infrastructure project (chapter five), residents felt the city engineers should listen to their opinions since, as residents, they understand the workings of the barrio in ways that are invisible to the outsider. Now, residents see themselves as the architects of the project; they are not seeking an audience with the powers above the bridge, but rather a partnership. Javier, previously afraid to 'touch' the idea, assuming that coming from the underneath of the city he will be thought crazy and be personally imprisoned, is now ready to talk, to tread a different path back through the city institutions.

*'Vamos a plantearlo. Lo planteamos a
quién sea...'*

*'Let's set it up. We'll put it forward to
whoever...'*

(Javier)

A conclusion to this particular journey comes when that which has been previously rejected and hidden from is affirmed. In the weeks that follow presentations are made to Ciudad Alternativa, Dixi, representatives from the Ayuntamiento and the director of the Botanical Gardens whose involvement is sought to ensure the compostible waste is not collected with other materials, but rather continues to be 'recycled', paid for under a different scheme; provision of manure to the Gardens.

A concrete solution has come through a story telling process which has, by its nature, been able to include the emotions and thus start a small healing process. It is only a beginning and only one form of the barrio's waste is addressed. The tigueros continue to circulate, but somehow, to those busy and confident organising the project, they seem, temporarily at least, to be less of an irritant. I turn now to the final chapter in order to draw out the wider implications of the stories, the methods and the subject matter of this thesis; a different way of looking.

CONCLUSION

Many everyday practices are tactical in character.

And so are, more generally, many 'ways of operating':... clever tricks, polymorphic simulations, joyful discoveries, poetic as well as warlike.'

de Certeau³⁶³

I walk up the Respaldo de San Marino³⁶⁴ for the last time, ducking under the Saturday washing strung from side to side and it feels to me as if I have been walking this muddy stretch for time immemorial. Heavy with the sadness of so many farewells, I wend my way to the top of the barrio, back past the secret police with their shades and mobile 'phones, across the market where the acrid rubbish rots next to the Dixi containers. I wait for the last time, outside the pharmacy, for transport. The heat prickles. For some reason images of the unremitting pain of La Ciénaga run before my eyes. I feel isolated. I wonder who I will talk to in London about these things. Passing again through languages. I have emerged intact, but not unscathed; my own geographies changed; the maps of my mind, my soul.

³⁶³ de Certeau 1974/84: xix

a summary

My enquiry started from a practical concern: how to differently address the intractable urban problems which face La Ciénaga and so many other similar places within the world's cities. Years of working within apparently different organisations and institutions, experimenting with different approaches, left me with the sense that something was missing. Going to work and stay in La Ciénaga I was attempting to change the vantage point from which the questions are asked. My recourse to theory was an attempt to change the shape of the questions themselves.

My research process has been an attempt to *practice* theory: imagining different questions that might be asked in the barrio and, in turn, building on the experiences and perspectives of those below in order to extend theoretical ideas: these are the stories which travel. The process has been open ended and, indeed, the ways in which open ended, changing, sometimes incomplete stories might have practical applications has been one of the most important discoveries of this research.

In the process it has become difficult to disentangle theoretical threads from the concrete: one has infused the other. Thus for example, Foucault's ideas on an archaeological approach have encouraged me to listen for the accumulated sediments of emotion within

³⁶⁴ This is one of the central callejones along which Margot and Yonesa live. A callejon whose name nobody

the individual; material which has in turn inspired and been woven within a practical solution to the issue of waste; a solution which has included both physical detritus and the emotional abject. Another example might be the way in which observed practices of inhabiting the barrio led me to Lefebvre's writings on the power of space, which have led me in turn to look further at the quotidian effects of the barrio's vagabond architecture; an architecture which must be dissimulated with the resulting profound implications for theories of community and organisation.

I draw three broad and interlocking conclusions from the research process, which I will briefly outline, before I return to them in more detail below. Firstly *there is a need to re-think the relationship between the 'above' and the 'below' within our cities*. The barrio is not a separate place, but one which is intimately connected to the wider city in complex ways. The dimensions and nature of these connections are broader and more pervasive than previously understood. Interconnections encompass personal and institutional networks, historical myths, the paths and journeys that are part of daily urban activity, emotional aspirations and a sense of identity as a citizen and as an individual. The failure to understand these connections has real and damaging consequences for policy and projects. It is a failure born of current ways of looking in which central elements of urban existence are overlooked.

remembered until the infrastructure project (see chapter five)

Secondly, and closely related, *there is a need to address the built space and the emotions, and the relationship between the two*. It has become clear that the city and its citizens cannot be understood without reconceptualising the role of the physical environment and in particular understanding the effect the built space has upon the senses of those who live within it. This is an area which needs both to be theoretically problematised and practically addressed. Attention to the role of the built space and the emotions further emphasises the importance of finding new perspectives and positions from which to ask questions.

This in turn leads me to my third conclusion, *regarding process; there is a need to develop new tools for research; the process of story telling is one which offers insights and new ideas*. Within the barrio have I provoked and listened to stories, often partial and frequently repeated. This is an open approach which can include elements important to the teller. It is an approach which is not bounded by strictures of time and content, frequently associated with the questions and answers which underpin both qualitative and quantitative research processes (see Annexe A: On Methodology). The results have included both a concrete solution to a very real problem and a reconceptualisation of the barrio: the people and place, and the way the two inter-relate.

The waste project (the subject of chapter six) illustrates the potential practical applications of an imaginative enquiry. Using theory I was able to change the shape of the questions. Questions which jolted the residents' own understandings of the issue led

to stories which at once revealed the very different ways in which waste is conceived within the barrio and engaged the residents' imaginations in the (re)thinking of solutions. The physical, social and emotional meanings and aspects of waste were included. Old ideas were rehearsed and gradually abandoned, part of the creation process. A solution was designed by the residents which addressed the 'built' and the social concerns of the barrio, and promised an articulation to the wider city. An enquiry which appeared at times, not least to the residents, to be esoteric, resulted in the concrete proposal.

The three conclusions and the concrete solution are closely linked and indeed it is the linkages, the way in which disparate elements simultaneously play upon one another, with which I am concerned. (An analogy can be drawn here with the way I have suggested that María understands both politics and personalities as relational matrices: a movement at any point creates change elsewhere (see chapter four).) For the purposes of emphasis and simplicity however I do want to consider each point in turn.

My approach offers lessons important for the making of urban policy, which touch directly upon the way we conceptualise our built urban environment and those who inhabit it. The nature and shape of participation, urban communities, place and identity are shifted by the stories told by those who inhabit La Ciénaga

above and below: the foundational myth

The above is related to the below, spatially, politically and emotionally. Re-thinking this relationship and the interconnections between the above and below (found in every city) has important practical implications. I have tried to make a different and textured argument accentuating the need to understand the locality in order to understand the nature of its political and economic networks with the wider city and, the broader interconnections which include the emotions, dreams and aspirations. It is the breadth and intricacy of the relationship between the above and below which I would like to emphasise.

understanding the locality

It is important to understand the locality. La Ciénaga, located below the bridge, has particular problems: for example, the concentration of violence, ‘streets’ which are too narrow to allow a vehicle to pass, places where rubbish accumulates. Equally importantly, the local place produces consciousness, that is, ways of thinking and a particular mode of understanding the city. I have discussed how, in the case of La Ciénaga this understanding is born through such factors as access to partial histories and the painful comparisons made between homes above and below the bridge. I am arguing therefore that it is important to focus on the below, not because the barrio represents a form of life which should somehow be preserved (a conclusion implicit within some of the arguments made by the parish priests), but rather because any solution to the

difficulties of the barrio will necessitate an understanding of local constraints (a factor disastrously ignored by the presidential infrastructure project) and, most importantly, because this understanding of the below is a necessary starting point to moving forward and re-thinking the linkages between the above and below.

political and economic linkages

To emphasise the political and economic linkages between the above and the below is not to make a point which is new but rather to draw attention to factors which are currently overlooked, or forgotten (perhaps like some of the important histories on which María draws). There are two areas in particular which offer important lessons for policy.

Firstly, the rapidly changing nature of the political economy, what I have previously referred to as the border war, has far reaching implications for the articulations between the above and below within the city. In chapter six for example I discussed the changing nature of 'work'. A category so fundamental to discussions of the political economy breaks down within the context of the barrio; a response to wider economic change. In the introduction, drawing on Foucault, I raised the question as to whether changes in the temporal context had made redundant the tools and approaches to social policy conceived in the late nineteenth century. It seems clear that elements of social policy based for example on bounded notions of the home and the workplace can no longer operate. There are some in La Ciénaga who benefit from the current disarray, for example drawing stipends invisible within national budgets. There are others for whom redundant rules

and regulations make access to services a source of stress; for example Margarita who could no longer place her children in school.

Secondly, I would like to emphasise the importance of thinking in terms of flows and articulations within the city when addressing concrete problems and issues. In practical terms, very few of the barrio's problems are particular to the barrio. That is, they might manifest themselves in a particular way within the barrio, and this must be understood but, as Silín recognises in her discussions on the body politic (see chapter three), the problems experienced within the barrio are symptoms of the economic, institutional and political problems located in other parts of the city. Thus, in the case of rubbish, both the metaphorical waste (the violence) and the physical garbage which accretes below the bridge, have their source in other places of the city and in the city's wider social and institutional difficulties. La Ciénaga's rubbish is not all locally produced. Similarly the rubbish remains uncollected due to fiscal, institutional and imaginative shortcomings found within La Ciénaga and other parts of the city.

Unless the above and below are re-linked any solution is likely to be short term, shifting the problem from one part of the city to another. In seeking to understand and reconceptualise the problems of waste (chapter six), I asked barrio residents to plot the waste stream. Maps showed the movement of waste, the institutions involved and problem areas and bottlenecks. Following the path of waste through the city (a physical journey through the city and an archaeological journey through the city's institutions) not

only revealed the source of the problem, but by showing the articulations between one institution and another, between one problem and another, led to a different understanding of the issue facing the barrio and the city. Most importantly, in the cracks and disjunctures within the current process, the creative potential for a new solution began to show.

broader networks: the aspirational and the emotional

Residents' attitudes towards their barrio, their homes, their possessions and their sense of self are influenced by what they perceive to be the 'norms' above the bridge. This is a complex and multiple relationship which is rarely seen by policy makers above the bridge. It is however a relationship which silently informs both the making of policy and the way it is received in often unexpected ways.

In chapter two I discussed the way that housing is denigrated and views on the desalojo are influenced in reaction to the perceived norms of housing publicised above the bridge. Comparisons with the wider city also influence the way intimate relationships such as the family are conceived. They affect a sense of self and thus attitudes and aspirations. For those who are strongest, the barrio like the home appears to be a prison from which they are desperate to escape. For those who are less robust the escape mechanism is to hide within themselves or to resort to those dreams I have characterised as a further form of dissimulation (chapter two).

Residents' sense of exclusion in Santo Domingo is part of the president's design; a design which finds expression in the built form of the city (in turn an expression of a particular vision of the political economy). I discussed for example in chapter three the way that barrios have been erased or sliced in two and the role of the monument which cements a partial history in which again the residents of the barrio are expected to have no part. These responses affect residents' motivation and action. In particular their willingness or ability to engage with the urban problems of which they are part is an outcome of this complex relationship with the city 'above the bridge'.

Those who live below the bridge live the intractable urban problem. They are urgently aware of the need for solutions. However, from their perspective a solution to the barrio or a specific difficulty which deals with the below in isolation is neither emotionally appealing, nor attractive in practice. Those who live in the barrio do not want to be imprisoned within themselves, their home or their barrio. Solutions must incorporate the dream of articulation to the wider city. They must be designed to present an imaginative and concrete path out of the barrio; solutions which do not crush the hope or the dream, but rather harness their creative energy. Self esteem and the potential to imagine initiatives and create solutions depend upon nurturing the possibility that the barrio dweller might one day live in a different place or in a different way. These are dreams which are not currently seen by Oxfam, the World Bank and other actors above the bridge.

Those who address the barrio as policy makers or project managers should also be aware of their own role in this multiple relationship which I have hypothesised touches the inner feelings of all those involved, including the actors above the bridge. These actors (a group in which I include myself) are too often part of the intractable urban problems. The demand to re-think the above and the below represents a new challenge for the role of the policy maker; a challenge to professional aspirations and visions.

I have argued that, to date, debates, approaches and solutions have relied on a myth of separation (perhaps a form of conservation withdrawal on the part of those with power).³⁶⁵ The emotions of those above the bridge prevent a more textured understanding of the city's problems. Solutions however depend on those above the bridge turning towards that which they fear and from which they have tried to distance themselves: the contaminated underneath.

Re-thinking the relationship between the above and below is dependent upon an exchange of information and dialogue. I will discuss the important nature of this communication in more detail below. Here, I would just like to pause to remember the disastrous effects of a lack of dialogue within the presidential infrastructure project, for example the atrophied architecture of the callejón found in the neighbouring barrio of La Ciénaga de Guachupita. The problems of the barrio cannot be hidden or hidden from. The difficulties presented

by the cañadas that were just covered over with concrete remains a powerful metaphor and a reminder that there is a need to unravel and *understand* the difficulties that the barrio represents. 'Participation' and community organisations within the city should not be decreed in order that those below might solve their own problems: the problems experienced by the poor are citywide in genesis. As I noted in chapter five, we all dissimulate and concentrate on small hopes. These are escapist dreams similar those of Yonesa in the barrio; a form of dissimulation which must be abandoned if we are to differently address the problems of the city.

The problems of the barrio cannot be easily eradicated or contained (the barrio specific solution). They can be imaginatively re-addressed and re-woven within the city. The first step is to concentrate on the complex nature of the relationships between the above and below. This approach (which implicitly includes movement and mobility) represents a new direction: a philosophical and practical shift away from the integrated urban development approach upon which current interventions are based.

built space and the emotions

The effects of the built space and the relationship between the built space and the emotions are subjects not generally given prominence in urban projects or urban

³⁶⁵ See my discussion on depression and survival techniques in chapter two.

theoretical analysis. Yet, La Ciénaga is a place so hated its residents block it out. Many of those who live in the barrio refuse to recognise their immediate locality: they dissimulate; attempting to distance themselves from the built space and the feelings of tension and anxiety it evokes. It seems clear that this close and tangled relationship between the built space and the emotions, central to the way the barrio is lived, must be addressed if interventions within the barrio are to be meaningful to residents.

At the outset of my research I hypothesised that the built space (architecture, infrastructure, the material surroundings) cannot be seen as merely the setting or the goal of urban action, the understanding derived from Castell's work, which still dominates within the work of urban theorists and planners. I have argued that the built space is part of the inter-active processes that take place within the city, an argument derived from Lefebvre. Thus, the built space not only provides a context, it actively and independently influences the lives, thoughts, aspirations and movements of the city dweller. Residents' understanding of the city and of themselves is, as I alluded to above, mediated by the place they live and in particular by the form of the built space which surrounds them.

the built space

At the city level, the built space generates urban economic and social dynamics (a process explored in chapter three). At the level of the barrio, the built space has an impact on

attitudes towards the barrio itself, the home and personal possessions. The space inhabited affects social bonds within the barrio and how the residents see themselves: their sense of identity.

In La Ciénaga, the vagabond architecture exerts practical and emotional effects. There is a need to constantly dig out the cañadas, a usually futile attempt to prevent flooding, and to walk defensively through the callejones, averting one's gaze and if possible one's mind from the anxieties they contain. Flimsy homes have floors which must be ceaselessly cleaned, walls and roofs to be propped up. Living in the barrio is time consuming (just one of the factors which militates against participation in other activities on the part of those who live there). It is also stressful: I discussed in chapter two the tensions which invade the threshold, the domestic difficulties. The misery caused by callejones infested by mud and violence and homes which leak lead to the reactions of aggression, depression and despair, as recounted in the stories told by the residents themselves.

the emotions

The realm of the emotions is closely related to the built space; feelings of fear and horror are imbricated within the spaces inhabited. These feelings and those memories and sentiments that accrete over the days and years, some related to the barrio, some not, are the sediment that forms the sense of self. Emotions determine attitudes towards quotidian activities; the value of work, the possibility of community organisation. They

also affect friendship and social bonds. I have discussed the negative effects of the lack of personal trust and the *chismes* [spiteful gossip and rumour] which are perceived to pervade the barrio. I have also emphasised the creative potential of the residents' emotions; the nascent alternative agendas which are contained within their defiant dreaming. Emotions, both those of despair and those of hope, need to be incorporated within representations and analyses of the barrio.

To address the problems of the barrio, the built space must be changed and the inter-relationship between the built space and the emotions must be understood and addressed. The observed experience of the barrio and the stories told by the residents demonstrate that it is not possible to address either the built space or the emotions in isolation from each other. María provides an infrastructure for the soul, as discussed in chapter four, which she herself acknowledges can have only a limited effect while the structures of 'her' barrio are not changed. The presidential infrastructure project, described in chapter five, failed to acknowledge the social attachments to place and the particular social practices the barrio gives rise to, and it thus ended in disaster. It is the experiences of those who try to change the barrio and foster community organisation which reveal the true complexity of the built space/emotions relationship and the innovative ways in which the difficulties might be addressed.

community organisation

Within La Ciénaga the realisation that the built space must be addressed has resulted in many attempts at community organisation, examples of which I have cited in previous chapters. Community organisation as it is currently conceived (a preliminary process to project implementation) is however impossible in La Ciénaga. Survival in the barrio entails blocking out what you see and what you feel. Community organisation by contrast entails confronting your own feelings and recognising the space you inhabit. As discussed in chapter one, this is a high risk strategy in an environment where projects generally fail and quotidian survival depends on denial.

Addressing the built space and the emotions involves understanding this delicate symbiosis and addressing what seems to be a locked circle (emotions which make participation impossible, which leaves intact a built space, which in turn leads to further negative emotions). It is in attempting to disentangle these issues that the important implications for urban policy and planning have become visible. The tools include how we listen and to what. Implicit within a new approach is a democratic form of communication in which information is exchanged.

Listening

It is important to listen to the ideas, views and visions of those who live below the bridge. This listening must be done in such a way that both the local expertise of those who

inhabit a particular place is heard and factors not normally voiced within a policy or planning dialogue find expression. The listening process should also take note of the conflicts and heterogeneity of the ideas expressed. As I have noted in chapter three, with reference to María's work, it is out of the clash of contradiction that new ideas can be forged. Those conflicts which are denied or covered over are likely to later disrupt the urban project. The varying views on the barrio over the desalojo, for example, could eventually no longer be ignored, erupting at the time of the presidential visit with negative consequences, as discussed in chapter five.

The story of the presidential infrastructure project (chapter five) illustrates the dangers of not understanding the residents' practical experiences. A detail as apparently insignificant as how the residents dispose of their rubbish was not known by the city engineers with the result that their works were destroyed, carrying with them many of the residents' homes and possessions.

The emotions are an example of those factors not normally voiced. 'Listening' in the case of the emotions entails observing gestures, eloquent silences and the ways that similar language and concepts deployed above and below the bridge can mean very different things. The emphasis on education to prevent littering is one example of the latter, discussed in chapter six. When heard, as I have discussed throughout the thesis, these emotions are an important source of creativity: the sense of something else.

Within the listening process, it is important however not to over-privilege the voices of the underneath. Those who live below are fallible and often without knowledge that would be necessary to make an informed decision. In chapter six, I discussed the way in which changing views on the desalojo wrong footed the parish priests. The Jesuits' long term involvement in the barrio had been based on emphasising the importance of local 'knowledge'. When some residents made a very public protest in favour of the desalojo, the priests retreated. Their wider experience persuaded them that a desalojo could never benefit the barrio residents however their views now verged from the voices they had made sacrosanct. The experience of the parish priests emphasises the importance both of making alternative stories and other knowledge available within the barrio and of understanding the mobility of ideas.

Making available alternative stories

Residents tell different stories and adopt different approaches, depending on who is listening and where they are standing. I have discussed the way in which perspectives and knowledge gleaned from above the bridge are woven into local stories and inform barrio opinion. I have also emphasised that residents are often without the information or contextual detail which would empower them to address issues differently. If the World Bank's maxim of 'letting ordinary people take control of their lives' is to be meaningful, participation and organisation should be effected in such a way that information can be exchanged, furthering the interconnections between the above and below.

In the case of La Ciénaga the example of history is pertinent. Visiting the monument made available alternative stories for the residents, stories with which they began to unpick their acceptance of their social and physical location of the barrio within the city. Access to alternative stories provided the residents with the tools to compete with the partial stories told by the president. These stories provided the residents with inspiration. Other stories, such as those I was able to tell about the waste institutions I had visited, enabled residents to imagine different concrete solutions to their own problems. The ideas, demands and views of residents evolve with time and added information. Old stories are used up and new narratives emerge; a creative process which has been at the heart of my approach to research.

the process

My research process and findings draw on the stories recounted in the barrio: anecdotes and conversations provoked by the exercises (described in Annexe A: On Methodology, which should be read as an integral part of this conclusion), stories embellished, spontaneously retold and fragments overheard. Finally then, I want to emphasise the importance of this story telling process (which includes the gestures and expressions which accompanied the telling and the ways of listening to which I referred above).

Stories allow for the incorporation of the realm of the senses: dreams and emotions, the importance of which I have already discussed. Their bumps and inconsistencies make visible elements which cannot be rendered in other, perhaps more structured or formal, modes of communication, but which serve to alert the listener to different ideas and openings. And yet, stories also carry central themes and elements which recur, illustrating what is important within a particular place or context and why. Stories can thus present the starting point for a new solution.

Stories can free themselves from established ways of talking. Like theoretical discourses, stories can alter the ground from which the narrator speaks thus raising new questions and making different openings visible as opposed to a continued quarreling with the quotidian. This potential of stories, from which I have borrowed, as part of the creative process of my research is a further example of the grounding of my theoretical approach to which I referred in my introduction.

Within the process of story telling a new argument and hypothesis can be developed. This apparently simple point has far reaching implications. Maria, the urban theorist, does not engage with tired, old arguments, she simply tells another story. I have acknowledged that her methods are not without practical difficulty (a difficulty shared with much theory), but their creativity is undeniable. Stories present a mode by which, instead of exhaustively and constantly re-engaging with old and tired frameworks, a new thread can be woven.

Stories change. They are also part of the process of change: they can be strategically deployed. The history of the ideas and changes (María's ancestors and uncle and in my case the Foucauldian perspective I carry with me), can become a tool for unpicking perspectives that are commonly accepted, much like the history of the city could be used as a tool within the barrio, as discussed in chapter three. Personal stories can be seen in this context, not as anecdotes, but rather as personal histories which heighten awareness. This a lesson understood by hooks, Lorde, Morrison and other feminists to whom I referred in the introduction, with wide potential application.

Stories are mobile and their nature serves to reiterate the importance of change and to advocate an approach to practical solutions and policy making which allows for flow. It has been a central discovery of this research that open-ended stories composed of curious juxtapositions can play a role in concrete change. Stories are constantly adapted and re-deployed. As such, they serve as a reminder to those above the bridge, the policy makers and project designers, not to get too attached to particular solutions or approaches. When the residents of La Ciénaga met the president with a demand for the desalojo, a representative of Ciudad Alternativa, the NGO which had worked so hard with residents to ensure their permanence within the barrio, commented to me that their failure as an organisation had been, that whilst they spent their initial years within the barrio listening and responding, in recent years, in concentrating on advocacy and policy change, they had failed to 'look over their shoulders', to keep pace with the changing situation and views

within the barrio. His assessment seemed strikingly honest, his conclusion one that many international NGOs as well as other actors would do well to heed.

A similar point is made in a wider context by Hoggett who argues that policy makers, like individuals need to know how to change and adapt (the lessons of María). Development he suggests, means finding a truth that is good enough and then moving on when the time comes, whilst holding on to the feeling that what has been arrived at was good and valuable.³⁶⁶ The mobile nature of stories creatively conflicts with the current demands of policy makers for a clear and consistent message. As Wade recognises in his essay on the art of paradigm maintenance referred to in chapter one, this has implications for the content of the message.³⁶⁷ In other words, the refusal to accept mobility goes to the inner core of the matter: it explains the something missing: the bumps which cannot be heard within the current framework result in the solutions which swerve.

Invisibilities will keep emerging if we have the courage to look. I suggest that, like María, we should embrace fallibility, in the full knowledge that this goes against the ethos of policy and academia, indeed our own emotional response. This would be a way of working which directly contravenes and challenges the framework of the nineteenth century which I have suggested continues to inform the tools with which we work, and

³⁶⁶ Hoggett 1992: 42-43

thus our visions and projects and the structure of the institutions through which we attempt to deliver solutions.

*

La Ciénaga no longer exists. In the final stages of writing this thesis Hurricane Georges ripped through the island: renting winds raised the barrio. Miraculously no-one was killed. The barrio's physical disappearance has however served to reinforce a sense that the barrio was only a story.

During the process of researching and writing this thesis, friends and colleagues above the bridge would often listen to my stories and ask with quizzical expressions as to whether I was writing a work of fiction or non-fiction. '*Hay que reiventarlo, todo*', 'The whole thing has to be re-invented', one friend sighed, after listening to me and reading yet another story in the press. Her comments, like the aftermath of the hurricane, seem to emphasise the way the barrio comes too easily to seem a mythical construction. This is perhaps a necessary form of distancing. 'Human kind,' wrote Eliot, 'Cannot bear very much reality.'³⁶⁸ Yet the effects of the hurricane speak of the urgent need to look in a different way, to seek creative and lasting solutions, in order that those who have little more than their dreams are not decimated by the tropical wind.

³⁶⁷ Wade 1996: 32

³⁶⁸ Eliot 1935/74:190

ANNEXE A: ON METHODOLOGY

‘How can we speak so as to escape from their compartments,
their schemas, their distinctions and oppositions. How can we
shake off the chains of their terms, free ourselves of their
categories, rid ourselves of their names? Disengage ourselves
alive from their concepts ?’ Irigaray³⁶⁹

The barrio of La Ciénaga/Los Guandules has an estimated population of forty thousand.³⁷⁰ Over a period of five years I have worked in depth with seventy five individuals, stayed with two families and had conversations with over one hundred and fifty residents. Just as La Ciénaga at once has similarities with poor, inner city areas the world over and is a particular place, those who have shared their time with me are at once ‘typical’ residents of the barrio and very individual characters. My research is not in any scientific sense ‘representative’. I write this, not in the form of an apology, but because from the outset I have wanted to stress the impossibility of, and difficulty with, an

³⁶⁹ Irigaray 1985: 212

³⁷⁰ The 1993 national census records the population of Domingo Savio (which includes La Ciénaga, Los Guandules and a tiny part of the neighbouring barrio La Ciénaga de Guachupita) as 52, 324. In 1997 Ciudad Alternativa estimated the population of La Ciénaga /Los Guandules to be 44, 584 of which 18,000 live on the lower ground known as La Ciénaga (Ciudad Alternativa 1988: 1). The population of the city of Santo Domingo is estimated at circa 2 million, the national population circa 8 million. (See introduction for a discussion of the difficulty with these figures).

approach that attempts to systematise and generalise, and to emphasise the exploratory nature of my work.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONCERNS

I have described in the introduction and elsewhere my interest in the intractable nature of urban problems which are too often solved, only to re-emerge and take new form. I have also commented on the way in which, living and working in low income urban areas in many parts of the world, I have been incessantly struck by the differences between the lives and places I have witnessed and the representations of these lives and realities in government reports and academic treatises. I have argued that there are deep rooted problems with the way we look at, understand and address places such as La Ciénaga, those who live there and the issues they face. To question the way we look is to raise a series of epistemological concerns: questions of methodological approach have been integral to and inseparable from my concrete enquiries.

There is a need for different perspectives, new tools and imaginative understandings; a need to escape the schemas and compartments of the nineteenth century, whose origins I described in the introduction. Within the context of this research I have thus tried to use my substantive concerns to develop new ways of looking and understanding. I have at once focused on areas not normally discussed or questioned within inherited frameworks

(the built space and the emotions) whilst simultaneously attempting to further probe the questioning process itself. This interaction between theory and practice, method and the concrete continue to evolve.

To reiterate, I have shown that there are substantive difficulties with *what* we are looking at: areas of key concern to residents are not included in the questioning process (an example would be the relationship between the built space and the emotions, and the complex and sometimes contradictory ways that residents understand their own environment). I have also argued that there are important difficulties with the *way* we are looking at the barrio and its problems. That is, I am arguing that to change the subject matter of the questions alone would not be sufficient. There are more deep rooted difficulties with the tools themselves (for example the census) and the way problematics are formulated.

There are three central failings in current approaches to research and policy. Firstly, an over-riding concern with generalising and systematising, and a preoccupation with averages and trends, militates against a portrayal and understanding of the heterogeneous nature of the barrio and thus registering the possible implications.³⁷¹ Secondly, qualitative factors are too often overlooked in research, surveys and analysis which concentrate on quantitative indicators. In the case of La Ciénaga for example a doctor

³⁷¹ See again the discussion of Foucault's work in my introduction, in particular his insistence on the thick description which should precede any attempt to systematise or generalise. Currently localised studies are

may be accessible in terms of distance, but as I have discussed, the way he treats you means you cannot visit: a factor invisible within traditional measurements. Thirdly, the statistical portrait on which most policy interventions rely represents what Haraway once termed 'the frozen moment'.³⁷² This frozen nature of statistical categories presents two further problems: a society under rapid transformation, such as the Dominican Republic constantly presents new edges of enquiry and social problematics that will not be picked up within long established categories (a difficulty with what the categories measure), and, as previous chapters have illustrated, any system which cannot incorporate change and movement within the categories will be of limited value (a difficulty with the way categories measure).

These difficulties with current approaches are recognised to some extent by those 'above the bridge'. The World Bank for example, once the supreme example of what Foucault termed 'geometer kings', have in recent years realised the failings in their approach as witnessed by the indicators debate and the constant question 'what shall we measure?'.³⁷³ One response within the World Bank and common to many other institutions and individuals has been to embrace more qualitative forms of research and measurement. I have referred to the potential difficulties with this qualitative approach in my

more likely to capture detail (for example anthropological studies of a particular area), but are less likely to inform policy debate (perhaps a methodological version of the above / below debate).

³⁷² Haraway 1985: 205

³⁷³ See for example Dubois 1992, *Think Before Measuring*, and the World Bank's Living Standards Measurement Study papers, for example, Glewwe and van der Gaag, 1988.

introduction and discuss these issues in more detail below with reference to my thesis research.

The shift from one set of measurement tools to another still fails to problematise the epistemological underpinnings of a way of looking that relies on measurement and systematisation (the nineteenth century approach). Questions raised by Foucault and the feminist writers on whom I have drawn, as to the possibility of neutral, objective measurement remain unasked, as do questions about the ways in which institutional agendas and links remain invisible and unchallenged, a particular interest of Foucault, as discussed in the introduction. I have approached my own research with a conviction that there is a need to hold these questions in mind, in order to look in a different way.

As part of the research process, I have constantly searched for the methodological ‘something else’; a way of questioning that might excite the imagination, make alternative threads and perspectives visible, thus leading to much needed concrete solutions. My research has relied on three strategies. Firstly, I have, as described in the Introduction, taken a particular approach to the selection of theoretical literature. Those writers on whom I have drawn have been used both to provide a theoretical context (one which focuses on the built space and emotions; subjects outside those typical of development research) and strategically i.e. as a basis from which to generate alternative questions which might be applied in practice. Secondly, I have extended and adapted a particular form of qualitative research, as described below, in order to generate a different process

within the barrio. Thirdly, my approach to the stories and other 'data' collected has been iterative. I have spent time in the barrio listening and researching, then returned to the theory, problematising my findings, before once again staying in the barrio.

It is important to emphasise the extent to which this methodological process has been a personal learning process. I was constantly surprised by the results of my research. The responses of those who 'dissimulated' at my initial slide showing for example were initially so unexpected that they appeared problematic. My response was to alter my research process to further probe what was meant by dissimulation and its role in the barrio. This change in tactics provided a rich seam; as I have illustrated the barrio cannot be understood without this practice.

I have been concerned throughout not to impose a story of my own. I have kept the jagged edges and the mis matches in my findings visible. My selection of empirical data has thus been dictated by the desire to illustrate the diversity of views within the barrio and the difficulty with many of the stories told, as opposed to searching for a coherent story and commonalities. There has been a productive, sometimes difficult tension between this objective and my determination to find practical, workable solutions to the difficulties of the barrio.

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Within the barrio my research has been broadly conducted in three ways. Firstly, I organised a series of participatory group exercises with five groups, the core members of whom have remained constant over the years (see Figure 2). Secondly, I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with key individuals and residents such as María, the priests and barrio organisers. Thirdly, I stayed in the barrio, living, listening, observing: the tools of the anthropologist. I should add that I grew up in Spain and I am a fluent Spanish speaker.

I have almost always carried a tape recorder, a notebook and a camera. Group exercises have used large sheets of paper, crayons, pebbles, beans, household objects, items of rubbish: whatever has been to hand. The result has been copious notes and hundreds of hours of recorded conversations which I have painstakingly transcribed. The difficulty of representing these voices and views in a written form is something I come to below.

In keeping with my broader epistemological concerns, I adopted a self-reflexive position during the research and have, as far as possible, attempted to keep myself and the research process in view in the written text I have produced. Again, the experimental nature of the research must be emphasised. I have improvised, adapted and innovated as the context and conversations seemed to call for. At times the result has been one of startling discovery, at other times my methods have been less successful. I have always

learnt and discovered something but I have often felt uncomfortable, vulnerable and unsure.³⁷⁴

selecting the barrio and the participants

I first stayed in the barrio of La Ciénaga in 1993. The choice of the barrio for my M.Phil. research was in some senses random.³⁷⁵ There are many similar barrios in the city of Santo Domingo but, having previously lived in the city for three years between 1989 and 1991, I was particularly interested in looking beneath the mythical images of La Ciénaga. The barrio is clearly visible from the suspension bridges which span the city. From the vantage point of the bridge, as I noted in my introduction, those who live above, project images of the terrifying squalor, crime and violence, which paradoxically secure their own superior status as 'first world' citizens above. Those who live below, as I have analysed in chapter three, look up to the modern and dreamt of city. The way in which the barrio and the city depend upon each other in this manner is a process with which I have been fascinated since 1989. Despite the warnings therefore, I wandered down into the barrio one Saturday in May 1993.

³⁷⁴ This has in some instances led to a perception below the bridge that I am something of an ingenue. Thus, when I left the barrio in 1997 to research the waste institutions above the bridge, and did not return during the planned week, Margot, Rafaela and others became concerned that I had been harmed in some way above the bridge and met to discuss what to do. This represents an interesting reversal of the expected power positions of the researched and the researcher and of the perceived stereotypes above the bridge, that I was in danger below, in the barrio.

³⁷⁵ Cottam 1993

For the purposes of this current research I stayed in the barrio for two further extended periods in 1996 and 1997. Within the barrio I stayed with Amparo and her family as described in chapter two. Above the bridge I have a 'home' with a friend who lives in the middle class neighbourhood of Gazcue, the part of the city where I too lived, between 1989 and 1991. Coming and going from the barrio always proved the hardest part of my research. Having sought respite above the bridge from the intensity of my existence in the barrio, I would both look forward to and dread returning. To walk down into the barrio however was always to realise how these ambivalent feelings too were, in part at least, the result of my own projected feelings and imaginings. Below the bridge I became absorbed in a complex reality and left these feelings behind.

Selection of the groups with whom I have worked has been a dynamic process. I continued in 1996 to work with the two women's groups I had formed in 1993 for the purposes of my M.Phil. research. The twelve women in each of these groups are neighbours, some of whom are friends or relatives, others of whom did not know each other prior to my work (I simply called through doorways initially and invited people to come). These two original groups (Margot, Margarita and Yonesa belong to one of these groups; Amparo, Fautina and Silín to the other) live in places divided by a number of the smaller cañadas. It takes about ten minutes to walk from the home of Margot to that of Fautina, but the two women do not know each other.

For the purposes of the current research I added three further groups of similar size, in different spatial pockets of the barrio. Spatial criteria were used due to the heterogeneous nature of the barrio and my own interest in the built space. The locations were chosen after walking transects of the barrio over a number of days. One group (that containing Tatty) live on the higher ground of Los Guandules. A second group (that containing Magaly) live a little further to the east of my two original groups, under the bridge. This area of the barrio, immediately below the bridge, is known by some as San Rafael and is seen by all to be the most dangerous part of the barrio. The third group (that containing Javier) consist of men. This group of fifteen contains two men who come from Los Guandules and the remainder live on the lower ground of La Ciénaga.

In selecting individuals to participate in the research, I sought diversity. I invited and included those who, in preliminary conversations, seemed to have different views or perspectives to those of their neighbours. Different parts of the barrio are given over to different activities (for example mop makers are clustered in one group of callejones, seamstresses in another): if I had missed such spaces I actively invited an individual to join the nearest group. At different times of day the population of any particular place in the barrio is also changing: those who fry *janicake* [large batter pancakes] are generally only evident for a few hours in the early morning, those who have ‘formal’ work in other parts of the city are absent during the central part of the day, the predominantly young women who work in the free trade zones only return to the barrio late at night. Again, I

altered my processes to include as many different 'lifestyles' as possible.³⁷⁶ Included amongst those who participated were those who work outside the barrio, those who engage in a variety of home based activities, those born in the barrio, those recently arrived, the young and the old.

The decision to form a men's group is a further example of the way in which the selection process was dynamically shaped. My M.Phil. research carried out in 1993 focused on women thus my original groups included women only by design. Since 1996 I have increasingly included men in my research although a focus on women's perspectives has persisted. There are several reasons for this. Women are generally more willing to join group discussions (in all barrio meetings women predominate and many men whom I initially invited told me they considered group meetings to be 'women's business'). Another contributing factor is the extent to which many of the male activities and interests within the barrio are illegal. This means that those involved were always unwilling to talk to me with others in earshot and in any routinised way. By far the most important factor however is that I am a woman. This meant that women opened up to me with ease and with pleasure in an environment where they are less often asked their opinions and social interaction is generally segregated by gender. I established a men's group in order to redress this balance. It was always the most difficult group to organise

³⁷⁶ It is important to note that it would be harder to ensure this breadth in the implementation of a statistically representative survey. The predominance of certain residents within the barrio at the times at which household surveys and questionnaires are generally applied calls into question the objectivity of these apparently 'representative' tools. In La Ciénaga it is the hours after dark when most (not all) residents can

and the most revealing and insightful conversations I had with male residents continued to be with those I engaged with in the billiard halls, at the edge of the domino table and hanging in doorways. That these conversations were ad hoc in terms of their timing and place did not prevent the development of sustained bonds with men such as Arismendy, Javier and Freddy.

Each group had a core membership of between twelve and fifteen individuals (a size I have found optimum for the purposes of discussion and participation in the exercises). Attendance was however fluid; a particular member might be missing and other neighbours would gather round on an impromptu basis. It takes considerable time and effort to organise such a group within the barrio. A time has to be found that is convenient to everyone (usually an evening or the weekend) and then several visits have to be made to each individual to remind them. Finally, at the appointed time and place, half an hour to an hour will elapse before everyone arrives. The activities themselves were timed to take place within an hour but animated discussions usually continued for at least a further hour.

I frequently met with demands from residents that I should interview either them personally, their neighbours or family. Wherever possible I obliged. I was also asked by a number of the barrio's teenagers and a group of children if they could form a group and

be found: the hours during which those who implement the state's measurements are too afraid to visit the barrio.

do the same exercises. I met with both these groups at intervals. The discussions were fascinating, but for reasons of space and time I have not been able to include the material in any systematic way within this thesis.

group exercises

During the two periods in which I stayed in the barrio for the purposes of the current research (1996 and 1997) my work was based around three central exercises conducted with each of the five groups. The exercises and their objectives are summarised in Figure 3. The barrio participants called these exercises '*dinámicas*', 'dynamics', a word which seems to me to better convey their nature.

I would start each session with an open, indirect question, explain the structure of the exercise and then observe and record the process which unfolded. Unless I was directly asked to explain a procedural detail (i.e. something to do with the process of the exercise itself), I remained, as far as possible, silent during the exercise. That is, I did not attempt to extract responses through questions, but rather let the process unfold as the exercise itself provoked the participants to discuss and debate opinions amongst themselves and, most excitingly, consider new ideas uncovered in the process.

‘Mapping Spaces and Emotion’: an example of an exercise in practice

The exercise I have entitled ‘Mapping Spaces and Emotion’ (see Figure 3, exercise 2, 1996), was, like all the exercises, repeated with all five groups in the barrio. I started by asking the participants to think of a place in the barrio that had a personal importance for them. After allowing a short period for reflection I asked the group to draw a large map of the barrio on the sheet of paper. Each individual was then asked to indicate a place, event and a feeling that the place evokes on the map. As each individual contributed other women would ask questions and make remarks. A spontaneous discussion would

Figure 3: Research Exercises, Objectives and Methods

Exercise	Objectives	Method
1996		
1. Slide Showing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reintroduce myself to the barrio and group participants.• Share the results of my previous research and elicit a response from those who participated.	A slide showing and open discussion. Slides depicted the barrio, residents and graphics summarising the results of earlier research.
2. Mapping Spaces and Emotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To understand how residents see the spaces which surround them; how they feel about the barrio and the fact they live there.	Participants were asked to draw maps of the barrio and depict places that are important to them and the emotion the place arouses.
3. Small Objects of Desire	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To understand how residents see their homes.• Assess the importance of private places within a denigrated barrio.• Identify what the residents see as precious within their environments.	Participants were asked to bring an object or part of an object which has personal meaning for them and explain the reasons why.
1997		
1. Evaluating the Infrastructure Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To understand how residents see the infrastructure project in their barrio.• To assess the advantages and problems of the project in the light of residents' (changing) priorities.	Matrix ranking. ³⁷⁷
2. Mapping the Waste Stream	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To identify how residents understand the waste industry.• To identify what services (formal and informal) currently operate in the barrio.• To understand, from the residents' perspective, the problems and priorities with the current waste collection service.	Participants were asked to draw a flow chart of how they understand waste is produced in the barrio and moves through the city to the tip. Participants were then asked to identify problem areas and bottle necks on their diagram.
3. Designing a Waste Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To identify residents' solutions to the waste collection problem.	Group discussions to produce ideas which were then evaluated and 'mapped' in terms of a flow chart.

³⁷⁷ This is one of the recognised PRA methods. A matrix is constructed: in this case of project interventions along one axis and the criteria (selected by participants) against which the interventions are to be judged on the other. Participants must then agree a score for each category using beans or some similar marker to record their group decision.

develop.³⁷⁸ In all cases the groups discussed the barrio in terms of the daily feelings evoked and in terms of their personal histories; stories of lover's trysts, fights and the deeper scars formed by repeated daily movements in a denigrated place. In all groups participants drew comparisons between local spaces and the wider city. It is from these discussions I have drawn the excerpts on the public places of the barrio quoted in chapter one and the section on the monument quoted in chapter three.

When the mapping process was completed and an animated discussion had developed I asked participants three further questions: whether they had memories and feelings attached to places in the barrio that no longer exist; whether there are parts of the barrio that have collective feeling and, finally, what images and senses come to mind when they close their eyes and imagine the barrio. Feelings and places were added to the maps.

The maps produced, a collage of symbols and writing, were not beautiful objects, but in all cases they revealed complex understandings of the barrio. In this exercise, as in subsequent exercises, residents would constantly comment on how they had not talked about these things before. The discussions and the process of talking aloud had the effect, as I have noted earlier of changing opinions in the process of the 'dynamic'. Several days later or during the next exercise residents might pick up on earlier comments and continue a discussion.

³⁷⁸ These discussions were usually disordered and enthusiastic, characterised by fast talking, laughter and sharp retorts. In two groups, over time, the women instituted their own system of putting their hands up to

The second exercise I conducted in 1996 followed a similar format, with participants asked to bring an ‘object of desire’ from their homes. They were asked to tell the group what personal significance the object had and how this related to their feelings of home (see chapter two). Additional questions included asking participants what ‘home’ meant to them and exploring the concept of beauty within the private place. In 1997, the exercises were more formally structured. I asked residents to evaluate and rank the success of the presidential infrastructure project according to criteria that they themselves produced. In the next exercise I asked residents to produce a flow chart representing their understanding of the movement of waste through the city from production to the tip. The charts showed the institutions involved at each stage and indicated problem areas. In the third exercise I asked residents to imagine a solution.

My approach originates in, but goes beyond the methods known as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). PRA has been described by Robert Chambers, the academic and practitioner who has done most to disseminate the methods within the Western world, as ‘a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act.’³⁷⁹ Some of the most important principles of PRA include a commitment to the reversal of learning (that is, a commitment to listening to the participants and learning from them) and a commitment to

talk, deciding that they should show each other more respect.

³⁷⁹ Chambers 1992: 12-15

seeking diversity (that is, deliberately to look for anomalies and contradictions as opposed to averages). In practice PRA consists of a wide range of methods which are continually being borrowed and adapted. What many of the methods have in common is a physical aspect: participants are required to draw diagrams, make models, use objects to score and rank. The methods are simple and readily understood by the young and old, those who are formally educated and those who are illiterate.

In my own experience, the physical nature of the exercises leads to a very different sort of discussion from that normally elicited by more traditional qualitative research methods such as focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The focus on a specific activity, most often at ground level, has the effect of making participants feel more at ease (they can look at the model or diagram rather than make eye contact with each other or the facilitator). The necessity to create and decide as a group on the outcomes provokes an engaged level of conversation. The decision making processes draw all those present into what frequently becomes an impassioned debate. This is thus a different context from one which merely requires participants to express an opinion, while others listen or dream their own thoughts.³⁸⁰ Diverse and changing opinions emerge.

³⁸⁰ In terms of project design, it should be noted that this process is also different with respect to the commitment elicited to participating in the implementation of the project which results from the discussions.

Through repeated practice, I have been adapting and developing these techniques for urban areas.³⁸¹ My own approach goes beyond that of Chambers in two key ways. Firstly, I have tried to keep the movement in responses and the diversity of opinions visible in the way I have presented my findings and throughout my analysis. Secondly, I have focused on the emotions, both as a subject matter, but also in my observations of how people respond and why. This emphasis on the emotions has influenced the way I have designed the research process per se (i.e. the way I have modified PRA techniques), and the way in which I have interpreted responses.

Working with PRA methods over time, I have noted that, despite the philosophical emphasis on contradictions and anomalies, PRA research results all too often in fixed lists and numerical weightings. What starts as qualitative research terminates as a quantitative list. The boundaries of the two approaches become blurred and, in the process, those things which do not 'fit' are once again elided and tidied into neat conclusions. The ways in which these conclusions differ from the reality that was first presented is a concern I raised in the introduction. Increasingly it is the diverse discoveries, which are excluded by the processes of tabulation, that have seemed to me to show the promise of new directions and different solutions: the literal something else. Within the context of my research for this thesis, I have therefore concentrated on the difficult detail and how it might be used.

³⁸¹ I have discussed this process and the applicability of different methods in an urban setting elsewhere, see Cottam 1994

There are three aspects of the diversity which does emerge, with which I have become increasingly fascinated. Firstly, many of the opinions expressed reflect dominant views or ideas. In the context of La Ciénaga this manifests itself as a below the bridge expression of above the bridge views. I have discussed in earlier chapters the reasons why such positions might be adopted by some residents, some of the time. This adoption of dominant views, whether through ignorance or for strategic gain is not however something that has been considered within the discussions on qualitative research.

Secondly, I have become fascinated with the way ideas change, are modified or discarded within the research process. This movement of ideas is usually invisible to those who are merely presented with the visual or written results of the research, yet the process reveals important insights into the ways in which participants prioritise, how they analyse and why they trade one idea off against another in a particular way. Both these insights and the fact that this process of change will continue make it important that policy makers see the process, not merely the results. This is particularly important if the results of the research are to inform concrete projects (my primary concern).

Thirdly, and related to the above, the extent to which responses are linked to emotions, feelings and matters of the heart, as much as intellectual ideas and matters of the mind is striking, if not surprising. Once again, I would argue that these are processes which

should be made visible and understood in their own right. DuBois has commented on the importance of the deep storm and stress of human souls, of which the casual observer sees nothing; ‘thought and feeling are hard to discern, but essential to proper description’.³⁸²

In seeking to address these concerns within the framework of my research, I have developed a number of methodological responses. My first response has been an emphasis on the juxtaposition of odd ideas and different elements (maps with emotions) and my apparently unrelated starting questions. That the questions and elements always appeared peculiar to those who participated, forced them to abandon stock responses to what are old and recurring problems. This approach is the methodological equivalent of cutting a different transect through a familiar issue and is in keeping with my Foucauldian concerns (see introduction). It is my attempt to encourage those who participated to re-imagine and, as I have discussed above and in chapter two, group participants were not only rehearsing old ideas during the exercise process, they were often *producing* ideas.

My second response has been to emphasise the role of changing ideas within the research. I have attempted this in two ways. During the process itself I tried to follow up on particularly stark changes through the supporting interview process, in order to better understand why changes take place and how this dynamism might be included and

³⁸² DuBois 1903/94: 109-110

understood within a policy making framework. I have also tried to keep the changes in positions and ideas visible in my written work.

With respect to the role of the emotions, I have centred the emotions as subject matter within the current research in order to better observe and understand their role both substantively and methodologically. The methodological and practical source of creativity which this way of working has made possible has been discussed in previous chapters.

What I have developed over recent years and had the opportunity to deploy and test within this research is not a tool kit but rather an *approach*. Again, I would like to emphasise the flexible and experimental nature of this approach. In La Ciénaga each exercise was adapted in response to the previous one. The results of one exercise thus provided the starting point for future conversations. Similarly the subject matter of waste emerged within the process. I had not predetermined at the outset of my research that this would be the particular ‘lurking problem’ that I would examine. My choice of subject matter in 1997 was developed from understanding the barrio’s priorities in 1996.

While this might sound esoteric, I would like to emphasise that I did have a very definite set of concerns at the start of my research which had grown and developed over years of practical engagement in the field of urban development. Similarly, I had determined that the area of built space and the emotions would be my starting point. I wanted to

understand how it felt to live in a place such as La Ciénaga because I had watched so many urban projects fail and felt this to be a gap in our current practical and theoretical understanding of cities. Gradually moving from the more obscure, imaginative questions to those directed at the concrete problem, the research resulted in a practical project that none of us could have imagined at the outset. How project directors and funders might be persuaded to engage in such an open process remains an unanswered question.

interviews and observations

During my months in La Ciénaga I continually conducted in-depth interviews with those who were members of the groups and other ‘key informers’. These interviews (like the more informal conversations I was constantly engaged in) enabled me to probe further into areas and opinions that emerged within the group exercises. I thus used the exercises to generate the research subjects and my conversations and interviews to follow up. An example might be the practice of dissimulation which emerged during the slide showing and then formed the basis of innumerable later interviews and conversations.

In 1996, I also used the interview process to explore general issues relating to the barrio and social organisation. The guide notes I used to question over forty individuals about their social networks and opinions on community organisation appear as Figure 3. In 1997, I developed similar guidelines as a basis for discussing barrio residents’ perceptions of the presidential infrastructure project.

My conversations with María took a different format. In 1993 it was she who interviewed me and this reversal of roles continued during 1996. As I have discussed in chapter four my attempts to direct conversations were always ignored. María would take on several subjects within one strand of conversation, sometimes within a sentence. She would then return again and again to the same subject matter over the ensuing weeks and months and, from her accreted pronouncements, I would deduce an opinion. María's methods of talking and storytelling have made both quotation and interpretation a problem of a very different order. In 1997, when María enrolled me in weekly classes, the form of our conversations changed again. I was easily amused, sometimes fearful, but it took longer for me to learn that very practical, if unusual perspectives were being revealed, if I had the patience to listen.

In general, observation of both language and gesture provided a rich source of material. The complexity of speech and the deployment of particular metaphors, while confusing at first, provided a path towards understanding sites of meaning important for the residents themselves. Equally important to observe were those 'comments' and contributions which could not be made in words. As I have discussed the diagrams, maps and models both provoked discussion and revealed important information. I watched the gaps between words, the ways in which actions differed from words, and the way people inhabited their private and public spaces. (This was a process of mutual exchange since I was continually questioned about my own mode of dress, haircut, way of questioning and

much more.) I walked the barrio paths and transects over and over with different barrio residents: a process which provoked the barrio residents to see their own barrio in a different way.³⁸³ I also organised the visits to the city monuments and down the river discussed in chapters three and four respectively. Both these trips provoked debates from which I learnt a great deal and changed the perspective of participants as to their city and their barrio.

Above the bridge I periodically conversed with the parish priests and representatives of Ciudad Alternativa. (Although these individuals live above the bridge, their perspective can neither be located 'above' or 'below', particularly since many of them have previously spent extended periods living in the barrio). I also conducted interviews and had conversations with historians and political scientists, politicians and service providers. These interviews have been incorporated within chapters three, five and six, and the individuals have been named.³⁸⁴

³⁸³ These walks, the visit to the monument and the river trip were inspired by the work of the Situationists (Gray: 1974). Their experiments with the *derive*, walking unplanned routes through the city in order to make free associations, share similarities with my methods and I have found the writings provide a useful theoretical juxtaposition, jostling with my findings, presenting further fusions.

³⁸⁴ I have not produced a list of those interviewed. It does not seem ethical to give the full names of those who live below the bridge. To produce a list of those above the bridge would be to privilege their information and go against the grain of my methods. Where possible, and particularly where the individuals concerned are accountable to the citizens of Santo Domingo, I have however named those above the bridge in context.

CONSTRUCTING A TEXT

When I joined Javier for lunch one day, he commented that I seemed a little down. I confessed to him that I had been feeling confused; overwhelmed by the quantity of information I was collecting and the way in which opinions and perspectives within the barrio tended in so many very different directions. It seemed to me that my love of diversity had got a little out of hand. 'Don't worry', I remember Javier telling me, 'you are like a film maker, at the moment you are just shooting reels and reels of film, you don't know what you've got, but when you get back to London you will piece it all together and the story will emerge'. (This from a man who is illiterate and has never been inside a cinema in his life.)

I can still visualise this conversation, at Javier's rickety table, a mound of beans and rice in front of us and Nubia watching from the doorway. There were many similar moments when the wisdom, insights or calm sense of the barrio residents took me aback. They would advise as friends or elders and constantly serve as a reminder of the strange, unjust world we were inhabiting; a world which enables me, the visitor, to tell a story which they would tell so much better if given the opportunity. What is also important is that Javier is right: a story has emerged, one which can include the (sometimes confusing) diversity. I have however tried very hard to keep the making and splicing of my film visible (perhaps Javier would be disappointed).

I have been surprised, given the debates surrounding deconstruction, that I have been unable to discover much writing on the problems posed by the construction of texts. My own difficulties have included those of editing and translation. I have had to select from hours of conversations, a task of ruthless editing. I have also made the decision to give emphasis to the voices of certain people, in order that the reader is not too confused by the cast of characters. I have chosen individuals who seemed to me to encapsulate views made by many others. This of course might be seen as my own peculiar form of tabulation. I have then had to translate their words from a very particular form of Dominican barrio Spanish into English.

Just as I have emphasised the gap between the barrio experience and the 'reality' presented by the policy maker, so I have found gaps emerging between my research and this text. No matter how innovative my research methods might have been in terms of gleaning information and enabling me to look in a different way, I have had to modify my form of delivery in order to be understood in the seminar room and in written papers. Language, the construction of text, remains in Lefebvre's words. 'a lethal zone'.³⁸⁵ There are things which remain unintelligible, regardless of the logic used or the way of looking.³⁸⁶ I hope however that the gaps in my text might be seen, further provoking the imagination, and thus becoming part of a continuing process of transformation.

³⁸⁵ Lefebvre 1974/91: 230

³⁸⁶ In the same vein the feminist writers on whom I have drawn emphasise the role of incorporating ideas rather than assimilating them (see the introduction and in particular Spivak 1997). Rose too warns against what she calls the 'god trick', emphasising the potentially creative role of uncertainty (Rose 1997: 311)

**Figure 3: Interview Guide for Semi Structured Interview 1996;
community and social networks³⁸⁷**

- . name, age
- . time in the barrio
- . previous place of residence
- . working outside the barrio
- . visits (and purpose) to other places in the city

- . social networks (in and outside the barrio)
- . have they changed over the years (when, how, why)
- . membership/sense of belonging to an organisation (why, which, activities)
- . membership/sense of belonging to an organisation outside the barrio
- . what organisations and groups exist in the barrio (purpose, membership, achievements)
- . are there groups with economic aims
- . are there groups with social aims
- . are there organisers that come from outside the barrio
- . who are the leaders and respected people in the barrio
- . are there people who are isolated in the barrio (who, why)
- . what do neighbours do when there are social tensions
- . what do you do to avoid disagreeable people or groups
- . draw out ideas on the ideal community
- . memories of people previously important in the barrio

³⁸⁷ translation of my original notes prepared in Spanish; it should be emphasised that these are not the questions (which were asked in an open ended manner), only the guiding notes

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